NEA Today

WASHINGTON, D.C. FEBRUARY 1996

...ERS OF THE NATIONAL EDUCATION ASSOCIATION

VOL.14
NO.6

RECHARGING THE PROFESSION

Why Kitty Boles and Vivian Troen are smiling about teacher education

see page 4

PRESIDENT'S VIEWPOINT

Christa's Legacy Lives On

"I touch the future, I teach." Christa McAuliffe, America's first educator in space, left us a legacy of much more than those simple words.

It's been 10 years now since Christa and six shuttle crewmates took off into the bright January sky. Ten years since she touched our hearts and set us dreaming with her spirit and her enthusiasm for the boundless possibilities of the future. Ten years since the terrible tragedy took a little piece of all of us with her into the heavens.

Christa showed us all how to live life to the fullest, never allowing fear to stop her from experiencing everything the world had to offer. She made the most of her far too brief life and died doing what she loved—tackling an exciting new challenge with enthusiasm, poise, and courage. Like the women who crossed the prairies in the Conestoga wagons in the 1800s, Christa was a brave pioneer.

After the shuttle tragedy, thousands of Americans contacted us, wanting to make a contribution to education in her memory.

To honor this remarkable teacher and her work, the NEA's National Foundation for the Improvement of Education established the Christa McAuliffe Institute for Educational Pioneering (CMI), using the gifts given in Christa's name for educators from across the nation who exemplified her pioneering spirit.

NEA President
Keith Geiger

Each year, from 1988 until 1994, five outstanding, visionary, risk-taking educators were chosen as Christa McAuliffe Educators, selected for their innovative use of technological tools to advance new ideas and learning.

Lyn Chan of Daly City, California, was among the very first group of McAuliffe Educators. Her project, TOPS (Technology Optimizes Performance in Science), helped prepare her young students for the 21st century through hands-on interactive learning experiences with laser discs, telecommunications, CD-ROM, robotics, and computers. She even took her class to the ocean floor on the magic carpet of a laser disc.

For Arizona elementary school teacher Jaime Roybal, a member of the McAuliffe Educators Class of 1994, the year's theme of improving the teaching and learning of culturally diverse students was close to his heart.

Long a believer that children "must do much more than just study another language," Jaime designed a project using telecommunications technologies to connect his Arizona students with their counterparts in Puerto Rico. They learned a lot about each other's cultures just by "talking."

To spread the expertise and teaching techniques of teachers like Lyn and Jaime even farther, the Christa McAuliffe Educators each summer passed ideas and methods on to 20 teams of top-notch teachers—Christa McAuliffe *Fellows*—at a conference at Stanford University.

In all, 30 CMI Educators and 98 teachers, school technology coordinators, and college faculty participated in these learning seminars, taking their new expertise and project ideas back to classrooms throughout the country.

These pioneering educators continue to make a difference in the lives of America's children, boldly moving in new directions and inspiring students to discover new methods of learning through advanced technology.

From bringing together isolated Alaskan Eskimo villages in cyberspace to simulating a shuttle launch via computer, CMI teachers are guiding America's students into the 21st century. It is an exciting journey, indeed.

As education employees across the nation remember their remarkable colleague on the anniversary of her death—January 28—many of us will honor Christa's memory and spirit by wearing stickers with Christa's simple but powerful words, "I Touch the Future, I Teach."

Christa McAuliffe's legacy lives on. It sparkles in the eyes of a child who discovers the wonders of the universe through a computer in a classroom. It shines in the face of a teacher whose student succeeds at mastering a task he or she was once afraid to try.

Christa taught us to always reach for the stars. Her dedication and example brought those stars a little closer to us all.

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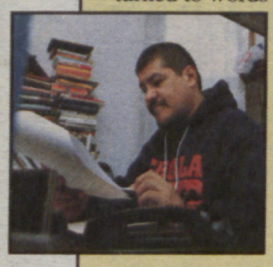

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Cover photograph by Jim Harrison

NEA Today February 1996
Vol. 14. No. 6

NEA TODAY is mailed to all NEA members. Annual subscription price: $2.81 (included in membership dues and available only as a part of membership). Institutional subscription price: $35.00 domestic and $54.00 foreign.

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NEA TODAY (ISSN 0734-7219) is published 9 times a year, monthly October, November, December, February, March, April, May, and biweekly in September by the National Education Association, 1201 16th Street, N.W., Washington, DC 20036-3290.

Second class postage paid at Washington, DC, and additional mailing offices.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to NEA TODAY, 1201 16th Street, N.W., Washington, DC 20036-3290.

Telephone: 202/822-7207.

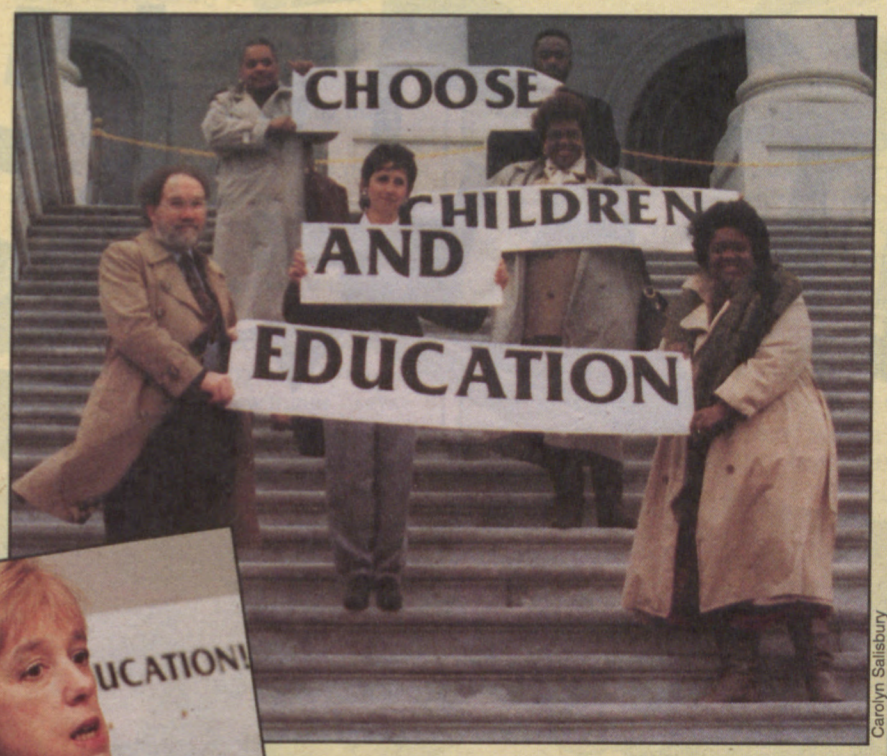
Unsolicited feature stories and news items are invited, but NEA TODAY can make no advance commitment to publish any manuscript. Manuscripts accompanied by self-addressed envelopes bearing sufficient postage will be returned within four months if rejected.

Although advertising is screened, advertisement does not imply NEA endorsement of the product or the views expressed.

NATIONAL NEWS

Educating Congress

"Children don't get a second chance to be three or six or nine years old," says NEA President Keith Geiger. "That's what this budget debate is all about."



Carolyn Salisbury

NEA members from the Washington D.C. area took to the Capitol steps last fall to protest planned education cuts. Left, Sen. Patty Murray (D-WA) says cuts "mean that a child won't get the extra help he needs."

Junne Rose, a second grade teacher at Dodge Park Elementary School in Landover, Maryland, worries about how proposed cuts in federal education spending—which at press time totalled $31 billion over seven years—"will filter down to the children I teach, many of whom are emotionally disturbed.

"I'm most concerned about the fact that so many children need so much help," says Rose. "Even now, we're working with extremely large class sizes and finding we don't have the necessary materials to do the job we need to do."

She and five other members of the Prince George's County (Maryland) Educators Association—Yvonne Baicich, Barbara Banks, Chris Jones, Jennie Jones, and David Thomas—were so alarmed by the threatened cuts that they took to Capitol Hill on National Educational Call-In Day, November 29. And they spoke out after standing at NEA President Keith Geiger's side during a press conference.

Baicich, who teaches physical education at Kingsford Elementary School in Mitchellville, Maryland, had this message for congressional tightwads: "More money means more schools, more teachers, and smaller class sizes."

"Congress keeps talking about cutting the budget to protect children's future, but it's very difficult to protect their future while at the same time ruining or destroying their present," Geiger told reporters. "Children don't get a second chance to be three or six or nine years old," he concluded. "That's what this budget debate is all about."

Throughout last autumn's budget battle, many NEA members sent messages like this to Congress. NEA's grassroots Congressional Contact Team (CCT) generated thousands of member letters, organized face-to-face meetings with lawmakers, and coordinated local activities with NEA state affiliates.

In Indiana, Association activists used a "CCT Crisis Phone Network" and NEA Online to update members on developments in Washington.

And the Indiana State Teachers Association sought out new allies—including advocacy groups for the disabled. Moreover, ISTA networked in the education community, inviting school board members and superintendents to a meeting with state legislators.

"What unites us is greater than what divides us. This isn't a labor vs. management issue," ISTA staffer Norma Kacen told the school officials.

What's the latest?

Congress and President Clinton were still locked in a budget battle as this issue of *NEA Today* went to press—with the President proposing an education spending increase of $35 billion over seven years. For an update on the latest developments, read the World Wide Web home page maintained by the Education First Alliance (the address is **http://policy.net/efa/efa.html**). Education First is a coalition including, among others, NEA, the AFT, and the National School Boards Association.

Fighting for education on the home front

During the autumn budget battle, some of NEA's most effective campaign work took place outside Washington. Just two examples:

➤ Karen Carter, president of the Dollarway Education Association in Arkansas, grabbed the chance to pose "one last question" to Congressman Jay Dickey at a meeting of Greater Pine Bluffs Chamber of Commerce.

This kindergarten teacher identified herself as an NEA member and asked the Republican lawmaker to "give an explanation of education cuts." Dickey responded, erroneously, that NEA "has never endorsed a Republican candidate," but Carter steered him back to the issue.

"*I happen to be a Republican,*" the local president said, "and I am concerned about the possible dissolution of the Department of Education." Dickey learned—quickly—that support for education isn't a partisan matter.

➤ Pat Van Ostenbridge, a middle school music teacher and president of the Somerset County (New Jersey) Education Association, used every opportunity to educate her members about the impact of federal spending on the classroom.

This Congressional Contact Team member spoke about programs affected by proposed education cuts—"particularly Title I and bilingual education"—and asked those present at an SCEA "county reps" meeting to sign postcards to Congress.

HEROES & ZEROES

A Crowning Achievement Award to Miss America 1995, Shawntel Smith, for speaking out on the importance of school-to-work transition programs. Despite pressure to steer clear of political topics, Smith is making proud use of her shining moment to lobby for programs that steer high school graduates in productive directions.

AP/Wide World Photos

The Real Junk Food Award goes to Kold Kist Brands, Inc. for putting "rocks, field trash, broken glass, and metal" into burritos it sold to schools in Los Angeles. Government surplus cheese and beans went into commercial products, while Kold Kist put surplus fat and pebbles in kids' lunches. No kids were hurt, but the L.A. school district lost $1 million. Three company officials pleaded guilty to fraud.

A Living Legacy Award to Ruth Wright, NEA president in 1959, and her family. After Wright's recent death, her family contributed $5,000 to help NEA fight the budget cuts now being debated in Congress. The gift honors both Ruth and C.O. Wright and provides a proud legacy to two fighting spirits.

A Dubious Distinction Award goes to the newest member of the profession—Teacher Barbie. Yeah, it's great when kids play "school" and want to grow up to be teachers. But what kind of role does Barbie model? She's got stiletto heels, hair longer than her skirt, and plastic accessories (chalkboard, bell, and clock) that aren't exactly cutting edge. Get with it Mattel—give Teacher Barbie a computer, a science lab, and a decent pair of slacks.

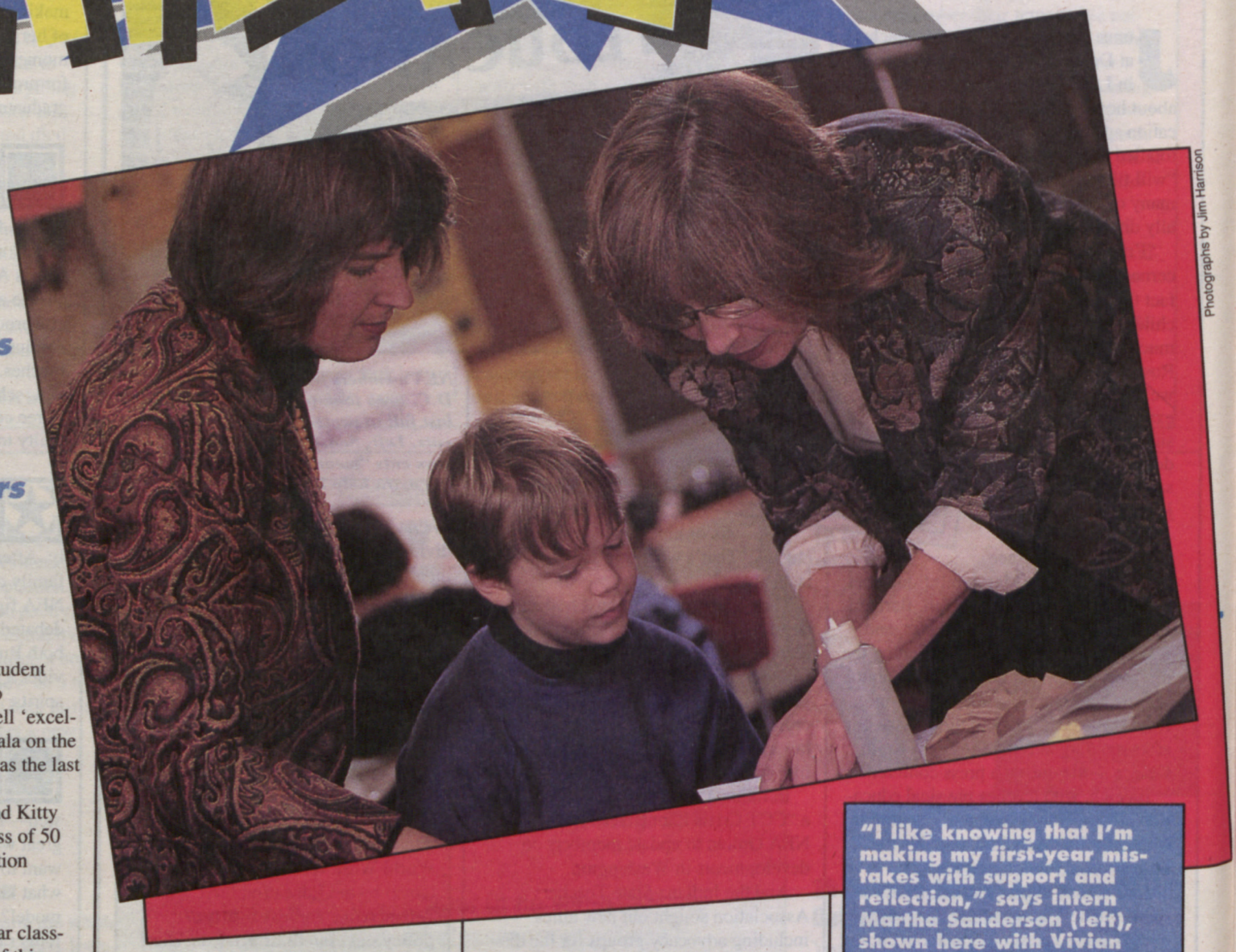
The Book-of-the-Month-Club Award goes to Dolly Parton and the Dollywood Foundation for a new program called the "Imagination Library." As a result of Parton's generosity, all children in her native Sevier County, Tennessee will receive a book every month from birth until they're old enough for kindergarten. That's a gift they'll have forever.

AP/Wide World Photos

COVER STORY

Need Your Battery Charged?

A partnership between Boston-area schools and colleges shows that sharing responsibility for training novice teachers recharges the experienced ones.



Photographs by Jim Harrison

"I like knowing that I'm making my first-year mistakes with support and reflection," says intern Martha Sanderson (left), shown here with Vivian Troen and a student.

"We had one student teacher who couldn't spell 'excellent' and couldn't find Guatemala on the map," says Vivian Troen. "It was the last straw."

The year was 1986. Troen and Kitty Boles were team teaching a class of 50 fourth graders at Edward Devotion School, a public K-8 school in Brookline, Massachusetts.

At the time, both were 15-year classroom veterans who "saw a lot of things that were wrong," says Boles, "a lot of things that we wanted to fix."

First, the student teaching experience. It was too short, too shallow, and "there was no connection," Troen says, "between what the college wanted student teachers to do and the realities of our classroom."

Second, the two teachers were concerned about kids being pulled out of classrooms for special instruction. Says Troen: "The kids with the most fragmented lives had the most fragmented schedules. It didn't make sense."

Third, Boles and Troen were frustrated by the culture of isolation that pervades teaching. "The only acceptable way to watch another teacher," says Boles, "was to walk through her classroom to get a cup of coffee."

And, finally, the veterans were eager for professional growth. "Over the years, teachers' skills increase," says Boles, "but they're not given any more responsiblity or authority. We wanted more opportunities for growth—without having to leave teaching."

So Troen and Boles came up with a plan. A phone call to education professor Karen Worth at nearby Wheelock College got the ball rolling. Thousands of phone calls and hundreds of meetings followed.

Today, a dozen teachers at Edward Devotion School are part of a partnership between six schools and two colleges—Wheelock and Simmons. The "Learning Teaching Collaborative," as it's known, unites pre-service and in-service education—and, say those involved, vastly improves both.

Though run by teachers, the program revolves around graduate students in education. From the pool of students who apply, teachers select "interns" to spend a full school year in the classroom with veteran teachers.

Interns are assigned to schools in groups. There are now eight at Devotion, and they meet regularly with a Wheelock professor who spends half her time at the school supervising their progress.

As part of the swap, veteran teachers spend time teaching at the college level. Devotion teachers Vivian Troen and Jim Swaim teach classes at Wheelock, while Kitty Boles teaches a class at Harvard's ed school.

Interns participate fully in classroom life, including teaching the class alone one day a week when veteran teachers have "alternative professional time" to pursue their own professional interests, such as curriculum development, research, or writing.

Common planning time and intern-coverage of classes allow teachers and interns—in a variety of configurations—to meet to plan curriculum and discuss students' progress. After the full year, plus two summers of course work, interns get their master's degrees.

Schools, like Devotion, that join with universities to train new teachers are called "professional development schools," and they are becoming more popular around the country. That's because:

➤ *Professional development partnerships provide those entering the profession with meaningful classroom experience.* The interns at Devotion say the full-year experience is comprehensive and both personally and professionally rewarding. All eight were enthusiastic and confident.

"The teachers here are welcoming," says intern Karen Glantz. "They want to participate in this, they believe in it strongly, and they're really supportive."

COVER STORY

With peers at the same school, countless meetings, and constant mentoring, interns at Devotion avoid the isolation student teachers typically feel. "We turn out interns who are exposed to the idea of working with others," says third grade teacher Betsy Lake.

"We try to teach them to be reflective, and we put a value on modeling the struggle. Nobody ever gets to see teachers do that," she adds, "and we want them to learn how."

Says Troen: "We want to bring people into the profession thinking about how best to teach kids, not just how to get them to sit down."

➤ *Partnerships improve college and university teacher preparation programs.* As a supervisor of interns, Wheelock professor Liz Larkin spends half her time at Devotion.

She participates in meetings, observes interns at work, and often leads discussions after "Grand Rounds," a regular opportunity for interns to observe veterans other than their mentors.

"I've learned a lot from being here," Larkin says, "like what gets stuck between a good idea and its implementation. I'm not isolated in the old ivory tower. I have a foot in the world that keeps me honest."

➤ *Partnerships provide opportunities for good teachers to get better.* "Having an intern in my classroom helps me constantly reflect on my own practice," says veteran Mark Jacobson. "It's almost like having a mirror in my own classroom. And I like that. I like learning about myself and changing and having that mirror there."

Plus, veteran teachers say, the interns and college professors involved at Devotion continue to bring new ideas, current research, and academic resources to their classrooms. That keeps them fresh, and, says Lake, "it's like having an opportunity to go back to school."

"Interns push us to try new things, and it's really hard to try new things," says Troen. "Particularly," Boles chimes in, "in a business where most people are approaching 50 years old."

➤ *Partnerships allow veteran teachers to pursue their own professional interests.* With 1,200 pounds of sand, a lot of water, and a video camera, fourth grade teacher Jack DeLong studies whether his integrated curriculum unit based on the study of rivers works with his students.

Veteran Emily Woodbury hopes to answer the question: "What happens when second graders are asked to draw as frequently as they are expected to write?" And Jim Swaim studies how best to teach third graders to write.

With one day a week out of the classroom, these veterans have what all teachers need to improve and stay interested—time.

"Having that time," says Jacobson, "has raised me to a level of professional development that I've never seen before. I started subscribing to professional journals—and reading them."

➤ *Partnerships improve education for students.* Many of the collaborative's advantages to kids are obvious—two adults in every classroom, no substitutes, inclusion for special ed and language-minority students, and a lot of reflection on what makes good teaching.

At Devotion, these advantages have led to others—like multiage grouping for reading, new curriculums in reading and math, and supervised independent study projects.

But perhaps most important for kids, veteran teachers who might otherwise have left are staying in the teaching profession.

"Being part of this collaborative," says Betsy Lake, "has made me feel that teaching is more of a profession than a job. And it's allowed me to grow—without giving up the children."

—*Stefanie Weiss*

For more information on the Learning Teaching Collaborative, send an E-mail message to Vivian_Troen@Brookline.mec.edu or write to Edward Devotion School, 345 Harvard St., Brookline, MA 02146.

Resources

- *Professional Development Schools: Schools for Developing a Profession.* Linda Darling-Hammond, ed. Teachers College Press, 1994.
- *Professional Development Schools: Combining School Improvement and Teacher Preparation.* NEA Professional Library, #1869-9-00-F, $18.95 plus s&h. To order, call 800/229-4200.
- *PDS Network News.* A newsletter coordinated by the National Center for Restructuring Education, Schools, and Teaching. For a free subscription, write to Editor, PDS Network News, NCREST, Box 110, Teachers College, Columbia University, New York, NY 10027.
- NEA's Standing Committee on Professional Standards and Practice is establishing guidelines for professional development schools, which will be released later this year. For more information, contact June Vanderveen, NEA National Center for Innovation, 1201 16th St., N.W., Washington, DC 20036.
- To discuss this topic with your colleagues around the country, use NEA Online's Teaching and Learning message board. Folder: Teaching as a Profession.
- For more information about a different sort of professional growth experience—national certification—call the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, 800/22TEACH.

NEA's National Initiative

"Today's teachers have a responsibility to make sure that tomorrow's teachers get the best possible training for their jobs," says NEA staffer Chuck Williams. "That's why NEA created the Teacher Education Initiative."

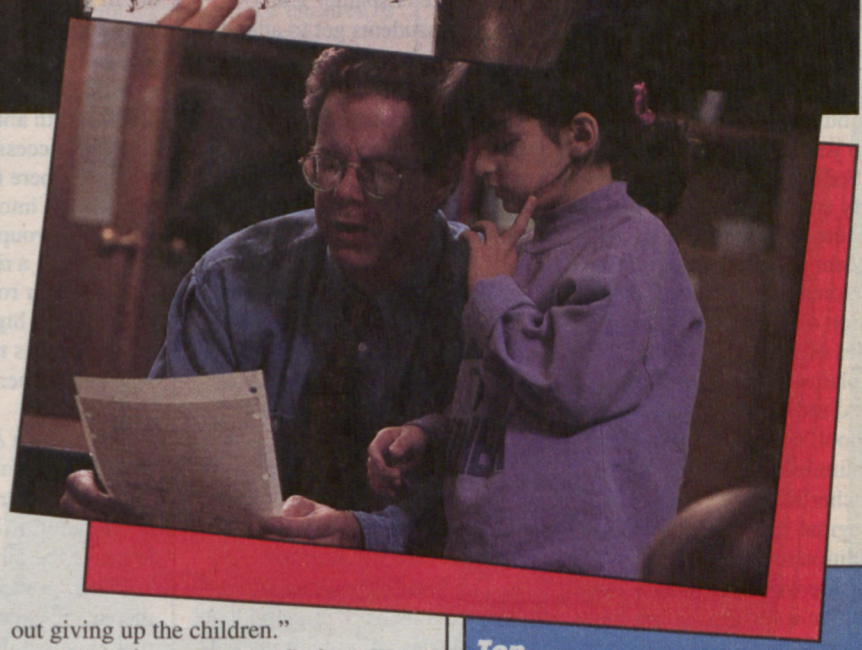
The initiative, which Williams directs, spurs and supports improvement in the quality of teacher preparation programs.

One aspect of that support is a five-year program linking seven universities engaged in the systemic restructuring of teaching and learning. They are:

- The University of Memphis (E-mail: Chance.Cindi@coe.memphis.edu)
- George Mason University (mlecos@gmu.edu)
- Texas A&M University (CLoving@TAMU.edu)
- The University of Southern Maine (Major@usmcoe.usmacs.maine.edu)
- The University of Wyoming (paradise@wyo.edu)
- Montclair State University (Pines@Saturn.Montclair.edu)
- The University of South Carolina (Larry.Winecoff@SCarolina.edu)

In addition, last year NEA named 10 schools "exemplary sites" for their promising efforts to improve teacher education. They are: Edward Devotion School/Wheelock College, East Carolina University, Wright State University, and the Universities of California, Maryland, Nebraska, New Mexico, North Dakota, Tennessee, and Wisconsin.

For more information about NEA's Teacher Education Initiative, write to Sylvia Seidel at NEA, 1201 16th St., N.W., Washington, DC 20036.



Top, Betsy Lake (left), Sophia Willie (center), and visiting teacher Elisa Bage exchange ideas. Above, third grade teacher Jim Swaim goes over a student's story.

HUMAN RIGHTS

San Diego Schools Target Dropout Rate

Aggressive measures help Hispanic girls 'get a plan and get the roadblocks out of the way.'

Paul Body

Hoover High counselor Ana Alvarez leads a program for 75 Hispanic girls.

One-fourth of all dropouts nationwide are Hispanic girls. For California's San Diego school district, the sixth largest in the nation, that figure is significant, since 16 percent of its students are Hispanic girls. To keep these students from joining the dropout ranks, the district created the Latina Advocacy Program in 1992, for Hispanic females in grades K-12.

One major component of this program is the Latina Advocacy Network. Every school that participates appoints one adult to create programs and activities for the young women who have enrolled.

At Hoover High School, ninth grade bilingual guidance counselor Ana Alvarez leads a program for 75 Hispanic students. Tutoring, both student-to-student and teacher-to-student, is a big part of her program. Two other bilingual teachers help with the activities that are mainly designed for the school's recent immigrants—girls who have been in this country from two months to two years.

For the 25 students who regularly attend a bi-weekly 40-minute program, "We do self-esteem activities like creative personality inventories, exploration of future roles and the roles of women in society," explains Alvarez.

At the alternative public school Youth Opportunities Unlimited or YOU, resource teacher Kathy Balakian runs a program for 30 students. In addition to honing skills such as resume writing, students participate in a session on domestic violence.

"The girls accept domestic violence as normal in their lives," says Balakian. "They complain that they don't get to go out while their brothers go out. They have to stay home and clean house. My message to them is: 'Get a plan and try to get the roadblocks out of your way.' This program definitely challenges them."

The Latina Advocacy Program at many schools also includes field trips to a university, where collegiate tour guides are Hispanic. The younger students get to attend classes and visit the cafeteria, bookstore, and dorms. At San Diego State University, two student college groups also work with Hispanic high school girls, encouraging them to stay in school.

Job shadowing has proved to be another popular program activity. Small groups of students visit offices and see role models in action. At AT&T, for example, they see female Hispanic engineers at work.

Each school raises its own funds for the field trips. Most speakers are volunteers.

The San Diego program supplements its work at individual school sites with major district-wide events:

➤ A conference in Spanish for parents, encouraging them to work with the schools and support their daughters. Parents learn that every girl can go to college.

➤ A special conference for girls in grades 6 to 8 and their mothers. Educators have found that most Hispanic girls drop out in seventh or eighth grade. This conference explores issues like gangs, drugs, and sex.

➤ A "conversation" with 1,000 fourth and fifth graders and 200 successful Latina women, where the women and girls divide into small groups to talk. This group of women also functions as a resource bank for the volunteer role models and guests at the high school. They are called "las madrinas" or "the godmothers."

The Latina Advocacy Program's greatest strength, says Irma Castro, the program coordinator, is its ability to improve the girls' esteem.

"Their grade point average is increasing every year. They're realizing that there is a whole future out there that they had never envisioned—and that with hard work, they can be part of it."

—Melissa Etlin

NEA Human and Civil Rights

WASHINGTON WATCH

Campaign '96: Candidates and Kids

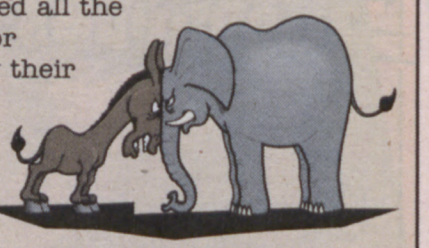
WASHINGTON, Dec. 7 — The day after vetoing a Congressional budget containing what he blasts as "deep cuts in education," President Clinton returns a budget proposal to lawmakers that *increases* funding for Head Start, Pell Grants, and education innovation.

WASHINGTON, Dec. 8 — NEA's 162-member Board of Directors votes without dissent to support the President's renomination by his party.

President Clinton, Board members concluded, deserves renomination because he's demonstrated a commitment to the criteria that NEA is using this year to evaluate how well political candidates support children and education. To win NEA support in '96, candidates will have to show they're committed to:

➤protecting children's health and safety,
➤preparing students for jobs of the future,
➤strengthening public education,
➤respecting the rights of school employees.

What about the GOP candidates?



NEA has also asked all the GOP candidates for President to show their commitment to the four criteria above. Only one, Lamar Alexander, has responded, and his positions—supporting public tax dollars for private school tuitiion, for instance—would undermine public schools.

Who will NEA recommend in November?

The NEA Board's December vote, notes NEA Government Relations Director Mary Elizabeth Teasley, will help NEA members get slated as delegates on the President's primary slates. Teasley is also urging NEA Republican members to seek election as delegates to the GOP convention, on whatever candidate slate they choose.

The final decision on which Presidential candidate to back in the '96 general election will be made this summer by the 9,000 delegates elected to the NEA Representative Assembly.

Here's what you can do

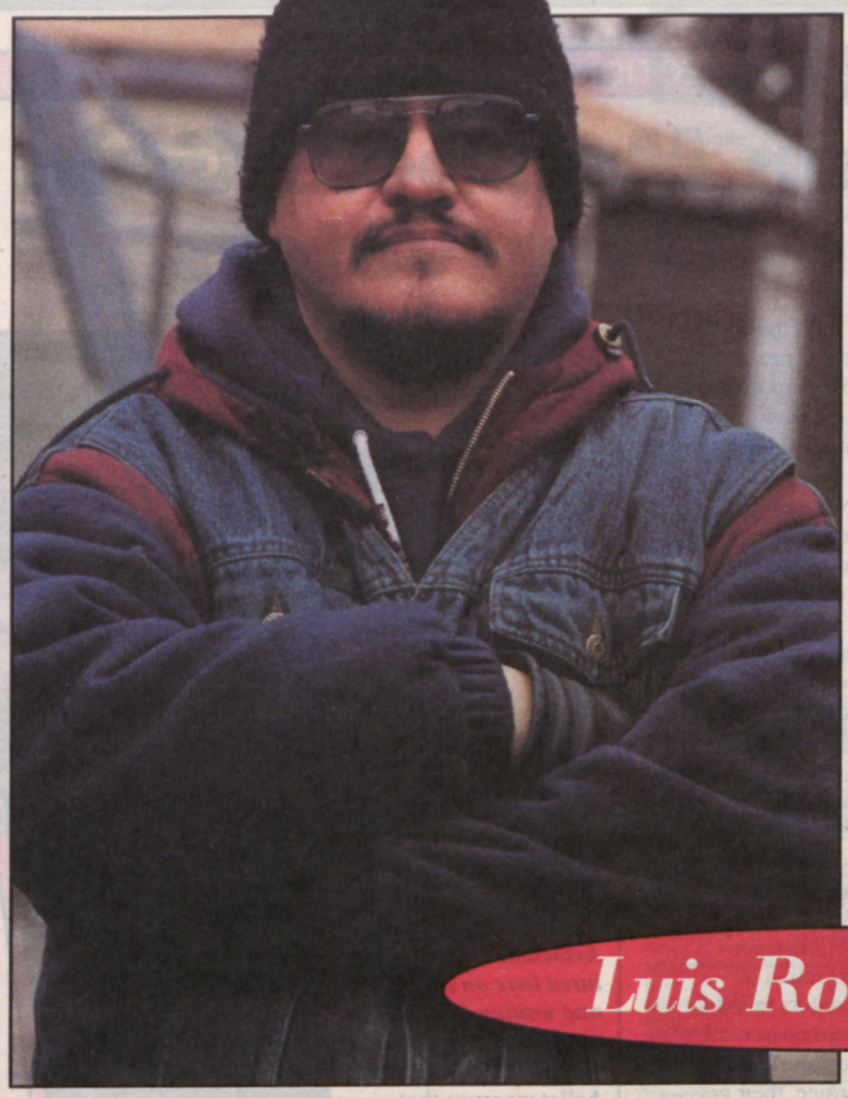
➤ Run for delegate to the Republican or Democratic Party conventions, then speak out for kids. If you're selected as a delegate, NEA-PAC will help pay your expenses.

➤ Participate in Association interviews of Congressional or state legislative candidates. For more information, contact your UniServ office.

➤ Volunteer to campaign for Association-recommended candidates.

➤ Contribute to NEA-PAC and your state affiliate's political action committee.

Meet:



Luis Rodriguez

Peacemaker

By the age of 12, Luis Rodriguez was a veteran of gang warfare in East Los Angeles. For years, he felt trapped by the drugs and violence that destroyed friends and family.

His route out of "la vida loca," this crazy life? Writing—first poetry, then an autobiography. His latest work is a children's book,* America Is Her Name, *due out this spring. Rodriguez, now based in Chicago, spoke recently with* NEA Today *staff writer Anita Merina.

Why do you say that it's tougher than ever to lure kids away from gangs and violence?
Gangs aren't alien powers. They begin as unstructured groupings, but they attract children who want the same things as any young person: respect. A sense of belonging. Protection. The same things that those who join the YMCA, Little League, or the Boy Scouts want.

Gangs flourish when there's a lack of recreation, decent education, or employment. I've talked to enough gang members and low-level dope dealers to know that they would quit today if they had a productive, livable-wage job and adults who care about them.

When I was growing up, even though there were gangs, there were also jobs available. Today's kids don't know where the world is going. They don't have anything meaningful to hang on to.

Tell us about your school experiences.
My first day of school said a lot about my school life to come. I was taken to a teacher who didn't know what to do with me. I didn't know much English, but I understood much of what she was saying. I knew I wasn't wanted.

Later, even though my classmates and I were often tough on many teachers, there were still those who believed in us and our potential. We formed activist groups for Mexican-American students, and we learned to speak out for ourselves. As I discovered the power of words and learning, I began to turn away from gang life.

Why do you work in schools now?
I've been on the streets, in gangs. I've done it all, the drugs and violence.

Yet I was able to transcend all of this through the arts and poetry. Through my workshops with kids, I hope to help students find their own voice to articulate their experiences, their pain. Words can give you the power to transcend even the strongest pain.

What do you tell the teachers you work with?
I tell them these kids are worth fighting for. Too many people in power believe they aren't worth the effort. That's why my work is so important. These kids can be extraordinary in the right environment and with the right commitment.

What can educators do?
I've visited schools where teachers and staff aren't following the old traditional ways of setting up classrooms: doing everything themselves, filling the room with shallow decorations like the rows of Presidents or animals. Instead, they're engaging young people with their own creativity.

At two schools in Atlanta, both with violent histories, the staff began using computers to get the children to tell their own stories. The kids seemed to change and became much more excited about learning.

What are some of your success stories?
My son Ramiro is the best example, even though he's still in a gang.

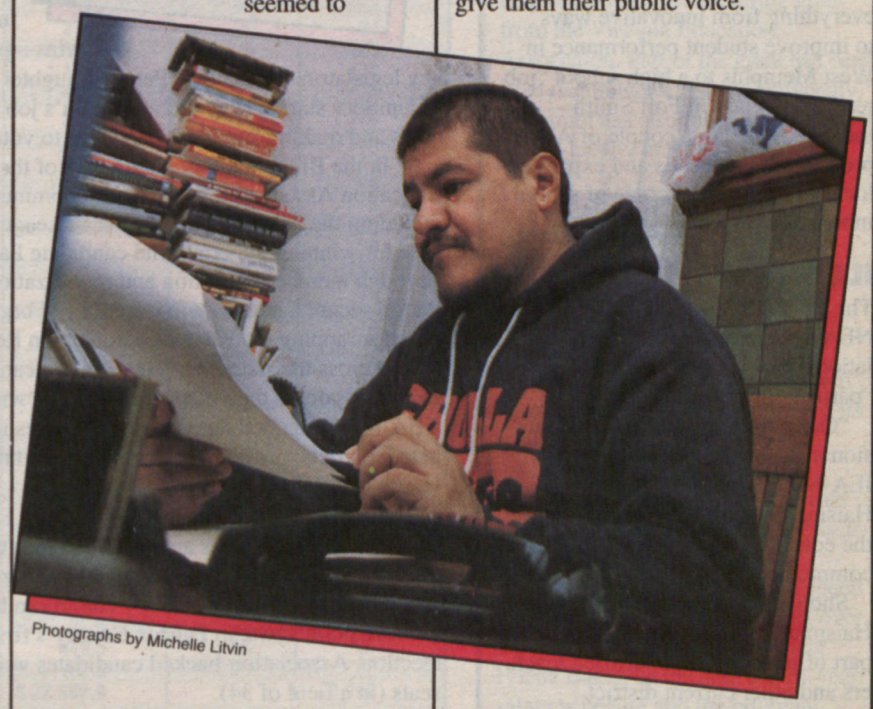
I wrote my autobiography, *Always Running,* to warn him of the dangers of gang life. He's become a poet and has spoken across the country. He's also co-founded Youth Struggling for Survival, which has organized gang peace summits and peace retreats. The group also works with Video Machete, which teaches young people about editing and filmmaking. All this after he was told he was never going to amount to anything.

Why's he still involved with a gang?
He feels he has more clout convincing gang members to get involved in other activities. He's showing many of his gang members that there's an alternative to violence.

Why did you decide to write a children's book?
I found few books for children that had the dimension I wanted for my own children. There were few stories about Mexican-American children or children of color.

Drawing on the experiences of so many children I met during visits to schools, I've written *America Is Her Name.* It's about a young Mexican girl who barely speaks in class. But slowly she begins to discover her voice through poetry.

So many silent children—particularly immigrant children—have stories that remain untold. It's time to give them their public voice.



Photographs by Michelle Litvin

Grassroots

State

WYOMING

"Because education is one of the state's most important functions," the Wyoming Supreme Court wrote in a recent ruling, "the state must provide quality education for *all* students, regardless of need or where they live." In a case in which the Wyoming Education Association was one of the plaintiffs, the court wrote, "Once educational need is determined, the pie must be large enough to fund that need." The state has until July 1997 to comply.

KANSAS

Buried under thousands of letters from Kansas NEA members, the state Special Committee on Education backed off of plans to introduce legislation gutting teachers' due process rights.

The Committee resolved instead to support a law enabling school boards to fire "poorly performing" teachers while protecting "good teachers" from "arbitrary and discriminatory" treatment.

The battle to protect employee rights isn't over, but "we have won Round One," says KNEA President Barbara Cole.

ARKANSAS

Taxpayers, lawmakers, and newspapers are getting the good news about Arkansas public schools. The prime source: a popular booklet produced by the Arkansas Education Association that tells 10 school success stories.

Containing statistics and stories—everything from innovative ways to improve student performance in West Memphis to a high school "job readiness" class in Fort Smith—the booklet led to a couple of AEA-produced TV specials and expanded local newspaper coverage of school innovation projects.

ILLINOIS

The Illinois Education Association-NEA created and is supporting legislation to open innovative public "partnership schools."

"Our plan turns local school decision making upside down," says IEA-NEA President Robert Haisman. "Nothing happens until the education experts, parents, and community get involved."

Should the legislation pass, Haisman says, "everyone would be a part of planning, and certified teachers and other current district employees would staff the schools."

POST-ELECTION ANALYSIS

Association Members Gain Allies, Win Over Voters

Election Day 1995 is gone, but the fallout from those votes will be felt for some time. There was some bad news—like the re-election of a pro-privatization school board majority in Wilkinsburg, Pennsylvania—but lots of good news, like the overturning of a Washington State law that would have gutted local education budgets.

Here's a wrap-up of what happened in November.

➤ By a 3-1 margin, voters in Manchester, **New Hampshire**, rejected a ballot initiative that would have mandated the privatization of Manchester city schools by September 1996.

During the campaign, Manchester Education Association President Ellen Healy reminded voters that "we should be proud of our 150 years of local support for public schools. Our tradition of local control means that parents, citizens, and the local school board determine the way our schools are run."

Effective arguments like this reached the public through advertisements, MEA coalition work (with groups like Citizens for a Better Manchester), and lots of legwork—everything from envelope stuffing to leaflet drops.

➤ While members of the Mississippi Association of Educators failed to unseat conservative Governor Kirk Fordice, their grassroots involvement helped elect a pro-education lieutenant governor, Ronnie Musgrove, and four other candidates to statewide office. Kay Joslin Walling, MAE's director of government relations and organizing, attributes these wins—plus the election of key legislators like Rufus "Pete" Straughter—to the hard work of UniServ staff. "They did a yeoman's job of assisting candidates and making sure people got out to vote," she says.

➤ In the Bluegrass State, members of the **Kentucky** Education Association worked with community allies—including the NAACP and the Urban League—to get out the vote for winning gubernatorial candidate Paul Patton. Through member education and mobilization, KEA helped Patton secure a narrow win over Larry Forgy—who had proposed scrapping the Kentucky Education Reform Act.

➤ Across the state line, **Virginia** Education Association members pooled their efforts and helped win the election of VEA-recommended legislative candidates in 15 out of 20 targeted districts, preventing a conservative takeover of the House and Senate.

The campaign's theme: "Good Schools Equal Good Jobs." The winning candidates are hoping to turn this theme into reality by pushing for reduced K-3 class sizes, school safety grants, and a computer in every classroom by the year 2000.

More good news: in Fairfax County's first school board election, Association-backed candidates won eight out of 12 seats (in a field of 34).

➤ In General Assembly elections, bipartisan campaigning by the **New Jersey** Education Association yielded a strong cadre of pro-education lawmakers on both sides of the aisle. Republican John Rocco, an NJEA ally who chairs the Education Committee, won a difficult race, as did Democrat and former UniServ Representative Arline Friscia.

NEA New Hampshire

Manchester Education Association members pictured here on the phones and waiting for election returns (above) successfully organized against a ballot measure that would have privatized Manchester schools this fall.

In a New Jersey contest that grabbed national media attention, Hudson County Executive Robert Janiszewski—a former teacher—beat a challenger backed by $600,000 in national GOP funds and supported by Bret Schundler, the pro-voucher mayor of Jersey City.

The Jersey City and Hudson County Education Associations "zeroed in on vouchers, Schundler, and privatization" in mobilizing 8,000 school employees for Janiszewski, reports Jersey City local President Tom Favia.

➤ Through well-planned campaigns, the **Colorado** Education Association helped elect pro-education school boards in major districts across the state—trouncing far-right opponents in Colorado Springs, Jefferson County (the state's largest district), Fort Collins, Littleton, Longmont, and Greeley. CEA also won major bond levies in Westminster, Cherry Creek, Littleton, and Aurora.

➤ In a ballot referendum, **Washington State** residents voted to overturn "Property Takings" legislation passed in 1995. The law called for government compensation to private property owners for any loss in property value resulting from government regulations.

Huge government reimbursement costs mandated by this statute would have "stopped or delayed school construction, created direct competition for local tax dollars, and made it more difficult to get operating levies and bond issues passed," notes NEA staffer Kris Hanselman.

IN WASHINGTON

Training Set For Paras

In a survey conducted last year by the Washington Education Association, special education paraprofessionals made it clear they need more training and clearer job descriptions.

With that data in hand, the state Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction awarded WEA a $109,000 grant to launch a statewide system of professional development for "paraeducators."

The Association is using the money to establish an advisory group to recommend solutions to problems identified in the survey and to hire a paraeducator training coordinator. Training in the most critical areas of work—including curriculum development and understanding the working relationship between teachers and paras—should be completed by August 1996.

Facing the need to meet federal special education guidelines, state officials saw the sense in entrusting money and responsibility to WEA—the only statewide entity that could effectively survey paraeducators.

In fact, 8,400 paraprofessionals responded to the WEA poll, citing needs like training for new hires, better accessibility to training, and more courses on everything from legal liability and classroom violence to behavior management and record keeping.

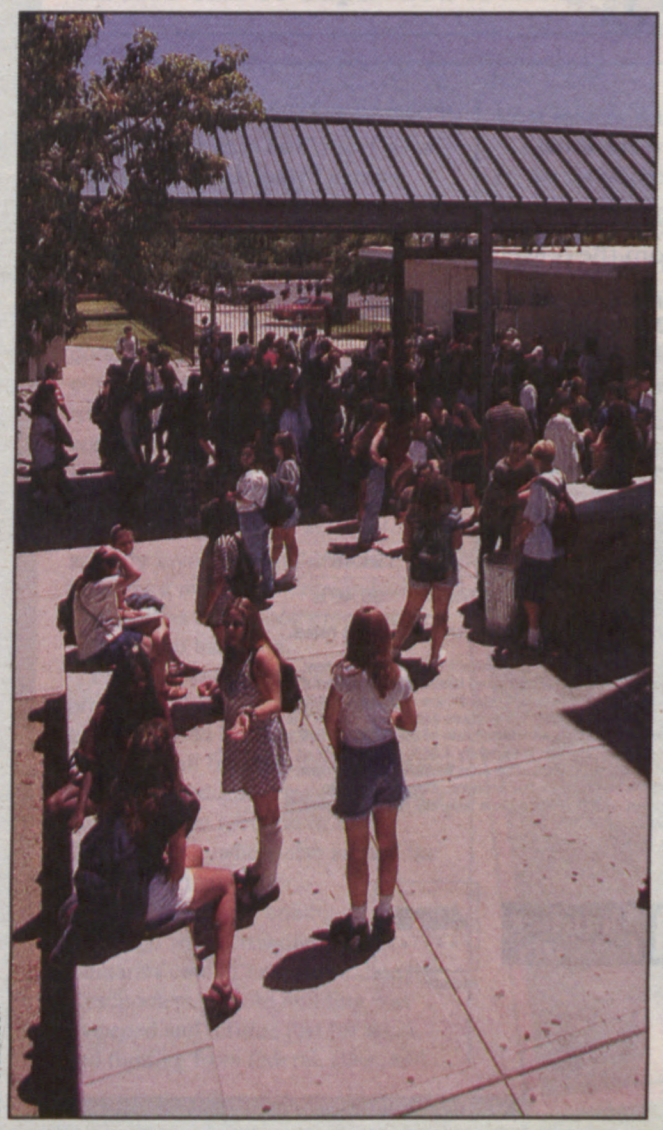
Says Lory Hester, a survey respondent who works with emotionally disturbed elementary students in Kent, Washington: "I know how to handle outwardly aggressive behavior. But now I see more passive-aggressive kids who just sit there quietly all day. This is not dealt with well in training."

Hester, who likes taking refresher courses, stresses that her large district provides "pretty good" training opportunities for paraeducators. But she cautions that when districts move into classroom inclusion, even more training, "plus time and support services are needed to meet child needs. Often a child requires more than a teacher can give."

BY THE NUMBERS

Need Is Great, School Funds Are Lacking

The nation's school buildings need more than $100 billion in repairs and replacement, but voters aren't rushing to come up with the dollars to turn this situation around. The chart at right shows the number of bond issues approved by voters in all states except Hawaii and Delaware in the 1994 school year. The highest spending region was in the South, the lowest was New England and parts of the Midwest.



Don Stevenson

Bond Issues by State, 1993-1994 (in millions of dollars)

STATE	PRINCIPAL AMOUNT	RANK	NUMBER OF ISSUES
Alabama	$ 222.7	28	21
Alaska	37.8	40	3
Arizona	837.1	9	75
Arkansas	247.5	24	121
California	1,441.9	4	163
Colorado	380.6	19	12
Connecticut	67.3	37	11
Florida	1,903.7	3	20
Georgia	716.8	11	35
Idaho	183.2	33	24
Illinois	1,191.0	5	155
Indiana	1,071.3	7	101
Iowa	136.3	35	44
Kansas	317.7	21	44
Kentucky	341.5	20	89
Louisiana	223.9	27	47
Maine	28.5	42	3
Maryland	7.3	47	2
Massachusetts	215.3	29	21
Michigan	1,065.6	8	105
Minnesota	1,150.7	6	179
Mississippi	181.2	34	22
Missouri	595.1	14	126
Montana	26.5	43	19
Nebraska	199.7	31	40
Nevada	190.5	32	9
New Hampshire	18.0	46	6
New Jersey	781.9	10	86
New Mexico	104.2	36	26
New York	671.5	13	161
North Carolina	233.2	26	14
North Dakota	25.2	44	16
Ohio	460.2	15	79
Oklahoma	206.6	30	97
Oregon	408.8	18	42
Pennsylvania	1,918.1	2	183
Rhode Island	35.3	41	4
South Carolina	282.3	23	43
South Dakota	56.9	39	25
Tennessee	434.4	17	47
Texas	1,939.9	1	194
Utah	294.3	22	18
Vermont	3.9	48	1
Virginia	233.7	25	6
Washington	709.0	12	99
West Virginia	22.6	45	3
Wisconsin	449.5	16	93
Wyoming	62.6	38	12
Top 48 Totals	**$ 22,332.9**		**2,746**

*Hawaii and Delaware had no bond issue for K-12 education in this year.
Source: Securities Data Company

Local

CALIFORNIA

San Francisco teachers and paraprofessionals won 3 percent raises, a one-time 1 percent bonus, and a one-shot payment of some $4.20 per student for classroom supplies, materials, and equipment. Teachers will decide how to spend the supply money.

The new contract also guarantees that local site planning committees will have information they need to discuss school operations—everything from personnel staffing to budgeting, explains Judy Dellamonica, vice president of United Educators of San Francisco.

NEW JERSEY

PepsiCo has dropped plans to provide $1,000 private school vouchers to low-income students in Jersey City.

PepsiCo now "realizes it was used" by pro-voucher Mayor Bret Schundler, says Tom Favia, president of the Jersey City Education Association. During a summit meeting with Favia, the company learned that three-fourths of Jersey City students attend public schools and that residents oppose vouchers by a wide margin. It also heard that JCEA members wanted to boycott Pepsi.

PepsiCo decided to donate money toward college scholarships—not vouchers.

VIRGINIA

Staffers at the Oscar F. Smith High School in Chesapeake are expanding their in-school Parent Center with the help of a $1,000 restructuring grant from the Virginia Education Association. Part of the grant has been used to conduct a "Parent University." The grant has also funded a successful parent-faculty breakfast.

ARIZONA

It took everything from rallies to a threatened one-day school "shutdown," but the Tucson Education Association has finally gotten an agreement.

Last summer, the district rejected an arbitrator's report and imposed its own "policy."

The Board extended members' salary schedule from 13 to 25 years and removed bilingual teaching assistants from many classrooms.

Infuriated parents, kept up to speed by TEA, "raked board members over the coals," reports local President Frieda Baker. In the end, the 13-year salary schedule and the bilingual assistants were reinstated.

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First Chicago, IL	3.05%	90.48%

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TMM026

Innovation

How NEA members are changing the way schools work

It's Circle Time

. . .at Lowes Creek Early Learning Center, where NEA members teach 3- to 6-year-olds that circles can be expanded to include everyone.

If it's the third Thursday of the month, it must be Critter Day at Lowes Creek Early Learning Center, a public preschool for at-risk kids in Eau Claire, Wisconsin.

Today's theme: safety. In the gym, kids watch Firefighter Lance demonstrate fire safety equipment. Next door, kids make "fire hose" necklaces out of colored macaroni. In other rooms, teachers, paraprofessionals, community volunteers, parents, and kids play and learn together.

So where's the critter? Well, don't look too hard—Critter Day doesn't actually involve animals. Rather, it involves a mix of children and adults that typifies the school's innovative approach to inclusion.

First, the kids. Lowes Creek's 125 preschool students are a merged group of Head Start, special ed, and ESL kids (all from Southeast Asia) housed and educated together. That's not a common scenario in Eau Claire—or anywhere else around the country for that matter.

The groups were combined three years ago when crowded area elementaries couldn't accommodate the preschoolers. An old building was reopened and refitted just for them, and funding from federal, state, and local sources was combined.

Knowing they'd be housed together, the six teachers involved met to plan how they'd work together. "We decided right away to break down some of the barriers," says teacher Lyn Krochmalski.

That led to team teaching and inclusion—two teachers and two aides, for example, for a group of seven kids with disabilities and 13 from low-income families.

"As a Head Start teacher, I brought some real strengths in dealing with the whole class," explains Paula Wainscott. "But Chris [Hambuch-Boyle, an early childhood special ed teacher] brought the other side—she's trained to look at individual needs. When Chris and I work together, the kids get the best of both worlds."

Photographs by Larry Salzman

Both morning and afternoon kids benefit from a hot meal, small adult-child ratios, and a rich, developmentally appropriate curriculum. But the biggest benefit may be a social one.

"These kids are growing up learning to accept any and all individual differences," Wainscott says. "They are really learning to care for each other—and, as an educator, that's a real joy to see."

Teacher Mary McFarlane and some of the Lowes Creek family, from left: Michael Ruthven, and Karley, David, Pam, and two-week-old Kelsey Smith. Below: Teacher Paula Wainscott with Mai Yer and Sheng.

To round out their definition of inclusion, Lowes Creek staffers reach out to parents, too. They make home visits, publicize their open-door policy, and model simple learning activities in the classroom that parents and children can replicate at home.

But beyond that, Lowes Creek offers a family literacy program for parents—25 or so each year—trying to get GEDs, get into college, or get some practical job training.

The program is run by two NEA members from nearby Chippewa Valley Technical College and funded by a variety of sources, including a federal Even Start grant.

For many parents with kids in Eau Claire schools, it's the only way to get an education.

"This year," explains adult educator Kathy Brunstad, "we have one young mom with three kids who's working on her GED. We provide child care for the 2- and 3-year-olds, so the mom can come here on the bus with the 4-year-old who's in the Head Start program here. Now they're both Lowes Creek students."

Notes one parent: "My son Matthew thinks it's cool that Dad's going to school, too."

At Lowes Creek, that's the full meaning of inclusion.

—Stefanie Weiss

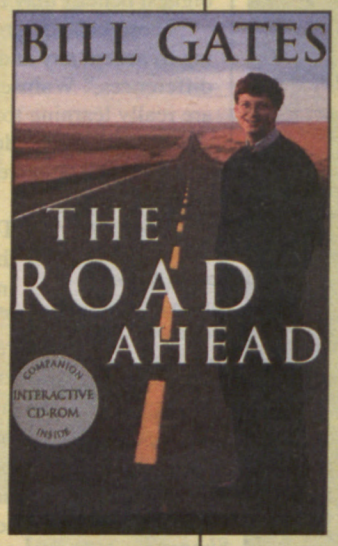
For more information, write to Lowes Creek Early Learning Center, 1029 E. Lowes Creek Rd., Eau Claire, WI 54701.

Left: On Critter Day in late November, fireman Lance Henson gets down to the kids' level to talk about fire safety.

NFIE

Technology Grants Put Schools in Fast Lane

Whether they're "telecommunicating" with museums, analyzing environmental data, or teaching desktop publishing to senior citizens, students in public school technology projects across the country now have some money to work with. They're getting $30,000 stipends and follow-up support from NEA's National Foundation for the Improvement of Education.



NFIE recently awarded these two-year "Road Ahead" grants, funded through sales of a book written by Microsoft, Inc. CEO Bill Gates, to teacher-led teams with the best proposals for integrating information technology with community-based institutions such as libraries and museums.

Gates donated $3 million to this initiative because of NFIE's goal to reach traditionally underserved students, ensure equal community access to new technology, and use these tools across disciplines to tackle problems.

The result: some exciting projects that turn students into problem solvers and push learning beyond—far beyond—the classroom. Here are the winning schools:

Alaska
Romig Junior High School
Anchorage, AK

Arizona
Phoenix Union High School District
Phoenix, AZ

California
Willow Oaks School
Ravenswood, CA

Davidson Middle School
San Rafael, CA
Piner High School
Santa Rosa, CA

Sonora Elementary School
Sonora, CA
Bijou Community School
South Lake Tahoe, CA

Alvarado Elementary School
Union City, CA

Colorado
Sedalia Elementary School
Sedalia, CO

Kansas
Atchison Middle School
Atchison, KS

Kentucky
Roosevelt-Perry Elementary School
Louisville, KY

Michigan
Lathers Elementary School
Garden City, MI

Lakeside Elementary School
Manistique, MI

Minnesota
Morris Minnesota Public School
Morris, MN

New York
Enfield Elementary School
Ithaca, NY

Greece Odyssey School
Rochester, NY

North Carolina
Elizabeth City Middle School
Elizabeth City, NC

South Carolina
Rice Creek Elementary School
Columbia, SC

Tennessee
Fred J. Page Middle School
Franklin, TN

Texas
Fulmore Middle School
Austin, TX

Vermont
South Burlington High School
Frederick H. Tuttle Middle School
South Burlington, VT

Washington
Nelson Middle School
Renton, WA

Wisconsin
Longfellow Elementary School
Eau Claire, WI

You can get details about these projects by writing to NFIE, Road Ahead Grants, 1201 16th St., N.W., Washington, DC 20036.

RESOURCES

Free or Inexpensive

PARENTING

Helping Your Child With Homework. U.S. Department of Education. This handy 41-page booklet provides practical information and ideas on how homework helps kids learn, how to monitor assignments, and when to talk with someone at school to resolve problems. 50 cents per copy. Write to Consumer Information Center, Department 310C, Pueblo, CO 81009. Also available via the Internet at gopher.ed.gov:10000.

CIVICS

Hail to the Chief! From NEA members Linda Niessner and Robyn Rippel (a mother-and-daughter team) comes this useful cross-curricular collection of activities designed to help K-3 students learn about the Presidents of the United States. The teacher resource book details a 42-day thematic unit designed to appeal to the learning styles of young students. $11.95 plus $3 for a tape of

"Presidential patriotic tunes," s&h included for NEA members. Order from Binky Books, 24W440 Eugenia Dr., Naperville, IL 60540, 708/357-6649.

SCIENCE

Lyrical Life Science. If your students have trouble grasping some principles crucial to understanding life science, here's a solution—a life science text that uses traditional tunes to teach concepts. A sample: "Oh Bacteria" sung to the tune of "Oh, Susanna." Oregon NEA member Doug Eldon wrote the text and lyrics for this award winner. $19.95 for text and tape, plus $3 s&h. Order from Lyrical Learning, 8008 Cardwell Hill Rd., Corvallis, OR 97330, 541/754-3579.

NATIVE AMERICAN POSTERS

Knowledge Unlimited offers this set of six posters and a teacher's guide about the lives and contributions of contemporary Native Americans, including Maria Tallchief, the best-known Native American ballerina in history, and poet/novelist Charlotte Black Elk, pictured here. Also includes a list of books by Native Americans, categorized for different age students. $22.95 plus $4 s&h. Item #7068P. To order or to receive a catalog, call 800/356-2303 or write to Knowledge Unlimited, P.O. Box 52, Madison, WI 53701.

ELECTION GUIDE

Project Vote Smart, a national, non-profit, non-partisan organization, is offering school employees a free copy of what could be called the U.S. Government Owner's Manual.

This manual provides a wide range of information about your elected officials, such as campaign finance records, voting records, and biographical information.

The manual usually costs $3.50, but NEA members can get one copy free of charge. Just call 800/622-SMART to order a copy, or visit the Project Vote Smart World Wide Web site at http://www.vote-smart.org.

ECONOMICS EDUCATION

The One and Only Common Cents Series by Neale S. Godfrey aims to teach young children basic economic principles—while entertaining them. The first book in the series, *Why Money Was Invented* (ISBN 0-382-24913-5), explores the concept of money through the adventures of the Green$treet$ Kids, namely Ona Budget, Small Change, Penny Bright, and Dollar Bill.

The second book follows the same cast in *Here's the Scoop: Follow an Ice Cream Cone Around the World* (ISBN 0-382-24911-9). Each book is $13.95 plus s&h and local sales tax. To order, call Silver Burdett, 800/848-9500.

PROFESSIONAL LIBRARY

Growing Smart: What's Working for Girls in School. American Association of University Women. This highly readable summary of more than 500 studies of how K-12 girls fare in schools also includes an action guide, a resource list of successful programs, and a bibliography. 60 pages (#2502-4-00-FF). $12.95 plus s&h. NEA Professional Library, P.O. Box 509, West Haven, CT 06516. 800/229-4200.

SchoolSite

NEA members working to make schools run better

Cleaning Up In Las Vegas

When custodians in Clark County, Nevada gambled on a new way to clean their schools, they hit the jackpot.

There hadn't been a pink slip issued by the Clark County school district since 1971. And, given the incredible population boom in the Las Vegas area in the 1980s and early '90s, no one expected one.

So it was a shock when, in 1993, the school board considered hiring an outside contractor—ServiceMaster—to train and manage the district's 700-plus custodians and groundskeeper.

"We didn't think it would happen here," says Pat BeDunnah, president of the Clark County Education Support Employees Association.

To prevent the subcontractor from getting its foot in the door, ESEA's leaders went into high gear.

"We knew we could run a training program, manage a more cost-efficient shop, and work smarter—without any outside help," says BeDunnah. "So we passed out flyers, held meetings all over the district, sponsored community forums, and packed a school board meeting."

After a lengthy battle fought on the front lines, behind the scenes, and in the media, school board members rejected ServiceMaster. Instead, they gave ESEA and its members the chance to find a better solution.

Which they did.

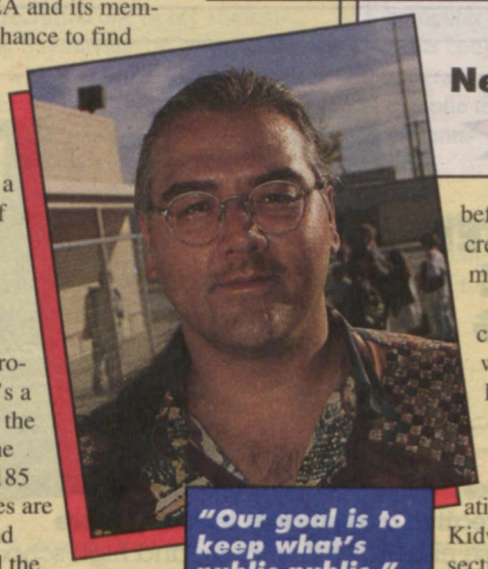
Today, a handful of ESEA members run an employee training program that's a model for the nation. The county's 185 school sites are cleaner and safer. And the district's saved $4 million—without layoffs.

So who needs ServiceMaster?

Not Tony Lucero, head custodian at Fay Herron Elementary School, which—with 1,300 students—is likely the biggest elementary in the state. From a custodial point of view, that's 60 classrooms, 17 bathrooms, 39 urinals, 19 toilets, and 31 sinks to clean every night.

And—thanks to attrition and budget cutbacks—Lucero's got only two night custodians to do it. Still, it gets done.

"We cover more ground than we did before," he says, "and we're creating a healthier environment for the kids."



"Our goal is to keep what's public public," says operations trainer and NEA member Barry Moore.

How can Clark County's custodians do so much more with less? To borrow a basketball phrase, they abandoned the zone.

"Before," explains operations trainer and Association member Rachel Kidwell, "each person had a section of the building to clean. Custodians did everything in 10 or 15 or 20 rooms, and they did it alone."

"Now we have a team cleaning system," she adds. "Each person or team handles one or more functions—vacuuming, bathrooms, dusting and trash collection—but they do them building-wide."

And they do them with the right tools.

"We've got vacuums with filter systems that don't put dust back into the air," says trainer Barry Moore. That's a big help, he adds, "when you live in Nevada."

Those who clean bathrooms have carts with all the supplies they need right at hand. Chemicals used for cleaning have been upgraded, standardized, labeled, and premixed for easy use.

The new system is so efficient that custodians have time every week for deep cleaning tasks that used to be done only once or twice a year.

An additional key to the program's success is the hands-on training component. Four trainers—all Association members, all former custodians—routinely visit school sites to teach custodians how to work more efficiently, how to sanitize, and how to use the equipment properly.

"It's the best system I've ever seen," says Lucero, who's worked in the district for seven years. "I believe in it."

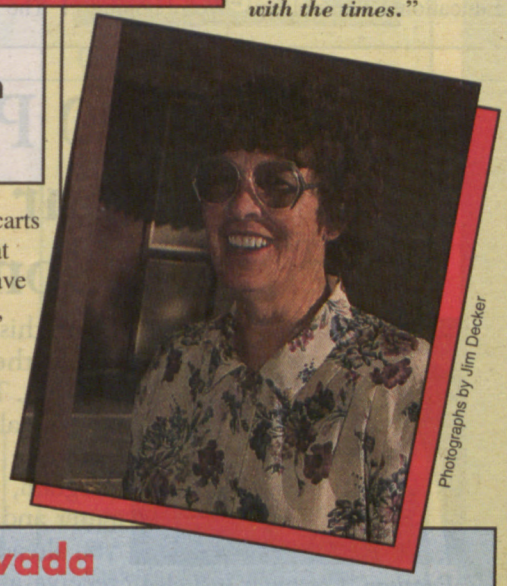
So, despite the loss of 168 positions through attrition and the demands of a rapidly growing district (see box), Association members report higher job satisfaction.

"We're working hard to bring quality up and provide the kind of service that a contractor can't provide," says Moore. "And we're doing it."

—Stefanie Weiss

Clark County custodians Robert Martinez (left) and Larry McCollum use the new team cleaning system to clean a school bathroom.

Says operations trainer Rachel Kidwell (below): "If we do contract cleaning in-house, we don't need to bring contract cleaners in. We all have to change with the times."



Photographs by Jim Decker

Clark County, Nevada

- **Geography:** covers 7,900 square miles, including Las Vegas
- **Size:** 10th largest school district in the nation
- **Number of students:** 166,778
- **Number of school locations:** 185
- **Number of teachers:** 9,000
- **Number of custodians:** more than 700
- **Largest elementary school:** houses 1,300 students
- **Largest high school:** houses 3,350 students
- **To accommodate growth:** will build 25 new schools in the next 3-5 years

NEW RESOURCES FROM NEA

NEA: Now Playing the World Wide Web!

Just a half-dozen years ago, hardly any Americans off college campuses had ever heard of the "Internet." Today, nearly 40 million Americans are "surfing the 'Net," the network of computer networks that links people around the world.

What's drawing so many newcomers onto the Information Superhighway—or cyberspace, as it's come to be known—is the World Wide Web, the graphical, easy-to-use side of the Internet.

Universities, government agencies, businesses, and nonprofit organizations of every stripe are opening World Wide Web "homepages" that offer computer users a dizzying array of informational opportunities.

This growing multitude of Web "publishers" now includes NEA. The inaugural NEA homepage opened just before the holiday break. It's reachable by anyone who has Internet access into the World Wide Web.

If you're Internet-enabled (see accompanying sidebar), you can access the NEA homepage by pointing your computer to NEA's Web address: http://www.nea.org.

"We've designed the NEA Web site as a resource for people interested in creating great schools," says Barbara Yentzer, the director of NEA's Center for Educational Technology. "We're hoping that NEA's Web presence will help Americans interested in education get the most they can out of the Internet."

The NEA Web page offers parents and other citizens a cyberspace chance to see for themselves what's happening in public schools.

More than a thousand public schools across the United States have already established Web sites. The NEA Web site makes it easier to find these schools—and add new schools to the online list.

At the NEA Web site, parents can find tips for helping students with homework or for keeping schools safe and secure. NEA members can use the site to access one of the many cyberspace discussion groups that educators have established on topics ranging from art curriculum to educational technology.

In the months ahead, visitors to the NEA Web site—if their computers are outfitted with the appropriate hardware and software—will even be able to download video clips from Teacher TV, NEA's award-winning weekly series on The Learning Channel.

One section on the NEA Web site may prove to be a particularly healthy tonic for NEA members home from a hard day in the classroom.

The NEA Web site's "Recess" section features a variety of real school-life stories—posted by educators—sure to bring a chuckle.

NEA member Patricia McMillion, a fifth grade teacher from Alabama, was one of the first NEA members to contribute a story to "Recess."

"A team of parents checks my students' spelling sentences, which the students write for their individualized spelling contracts," related McMillion. "The parents have begun to collect the 'best' sentences in a notebook . . . to make my day. Today I found this one: 'Word: abstract. Sentence: My mother makes cookies with vanilla abstract.'"

Here's the Easiest Way To Go Online

Ready to start exploring the Internet's World Wide Web? Getting onto the Web used to be difficult. No more. Today, all the major computer online services offer Web access as part of their monthly subscription price.

For NEA members, the best online deal remains America Online. A basic subscription offers five free hours a month for Internet "surfing." Additional hours cost $2.95 per hour.

NEA members on America Online can also access NEA Online, the America Online area for NEA members only.

To take advantage of the special America Online subscription for NEA members, you need installation software that's available free. Just call America Online at 800/781-5577. Be sure to identify yourself as a member of NEA.

To go online, your computer must be equipped with a modem, a device that allows computers to communicate with each other over the phone lines.

One final note: If you've bought a new computer that includes America Online pre-installed, you will not be registered as an NEA member when you use that software to begin your America Online subscription account. To be registered as an NEA member, you need to install the NEA-coded installation disk for America Online available from the 800 number listed above.

If you've already registered as an America Online subscriber via the software that came pre-installed on your new computer, you can convert your subscription into an NEA account. Just keyword: NEA Public, then click the "NEA Online" button and follow the instructions on the subsequent screen.

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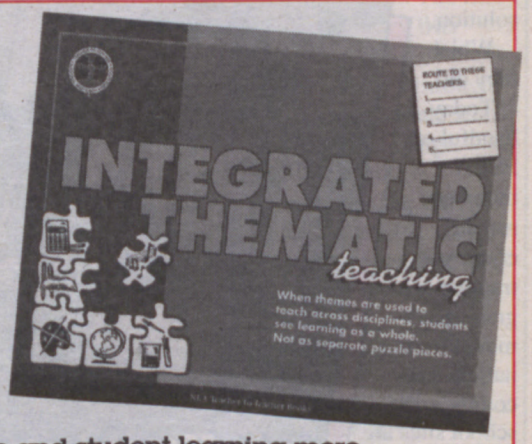
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ByteSize

NEA members using technology to improve education

IN THE CLASSROOM

Archives Come Alive

WHO: Deb Merxbauer, multimedia computer, computer graphics, and art electives teacher, Washington High School, Sioux Falls, South Dakota

E-MAIL ADDRESS:
deb.merxbauer@yebb.com

WHAT: Cast aside those dusty photos and yellowed clips. Multimedia archives can bring school history to life.

INSPIRATION: With the recent advances in computer technology, especially in the multimedia area, I saw an exciting opportunity to compile and preserve school archives in a complete and interactive way.

My first project: archive the 1994-95 boys basketball season.

Any archive can provide a story about the season, still portraits of each player and coach, stats—and mine does! But my project also includes audio clips of the players and coaches talking about the games, video clips of the team in action, audio of the fans and cheers, and computer animation.

I recruited one of my students, Teng Sayasavanh, to compile the project with me, using IBM's LinkWay Live! authoring software. It's been stored on an optical disk, and I plan to transfer it to CD-ROM.

My dream is to add a computer to the school's trophy case, where the public can access information on the school's history just by touching the screen.

But my vision goes beyond interactive archives. I want to encourage an interdisciplinary use of multimedia through a school-wide project that would give staff and students the opportunity to record the history of Washington High.

Students in history could research the events, English and journalism students could write them up. Tech ed, journalism, and Photo Club students could take, develop, print, and scan the photos. Student managers and statisticians could compile statistics. TV, radio, and theater students could record the audio and video, with art students adding the illustrations and graphics. Vocal and instrumental students could record background music. And math and advanced computer students could program and compile the presentations.

CLICK: The members of the Tribal Club, which I advise, are compiling a multimedia presentation to teach others about the Native American culture.

It's very rewarding to listen to students brainstorm the merits of multimedia presentations even outside the classroom.

Sioux Falls teacher Deb Merxbauer wants Washington High staff and students to record the school's history using a multimedia approach.

Lloyd Cunningham

BYTES FOR BEGINNERS

"Welcome! You've got mail." A growing number of people in classrooms are hearing this welcoming message as they log on to their online service. School staff and students are continuing to connect to other learning environments across the globe via electronic mail—the single most widely used online tool.

Teachers are just beginning to tap the learning potential that E-mail provides. Students swap school newspapers and collaborate on school projects.

Keypals—pen pals who correspond via E-mail—whose E-mail programs support MIME (Multipurpose Internet Mail Extension technology) are able to exchange multimedia files such as graphics, non-English character sets, sound, or video along with messages.

To view a list of keypals looking for E-mail contacts, send E-mail to info@classroom.net. To submit a call for keypals, send your request to tmc@classroom.net.

Don't worry if your school's not yet "on the Net." If you have access to a commercial online service such as America Online, you can send E-mail to and receive E-mail from the Internet.

If you have access to the Web, check out http://www.stolaf.edu/network/iecc for information about E-mail projects involving other countries and cultures.

NEW & NOTEWORTHY

MAYAQUEST
■ Students in grades three through 12 are invited to join Mayaquest '96, an interactive project through the Internet. Students will guide an expedition through ancient Mayan ruins by doing research and asking questions of the archeologists. Students can look at site photographs and exchange messages with students from around the world. (Project runs from March 1-April 30). Call 800/375-0055 or visit (http://mayaquest.mecc.com/MQII.html).

INTERNATIONAL
■ The Transatlantic Classroom is searching for more American students. This is a chance for high school and college students to discuss local politics, cultural insights, teen life and other subjects. For more information, E-mail (kotto@koerb02.schule.dkrz.d400.de).

INTERNET GRANT
■ Cisco Systems is offering grants of up to $10,000 to selected K-12 schools to help them connect to the Internet. Application deadline is March 1. For applications, call 408/526-4226 or E-mail (edu-grant@cisco.com).

RESOURCES

GRANTS
■ "Funding Educational Technology," a videoconference on February 1, 1996, will provide information on private grant sources for education technology as well as updates on how federal grant programs are faring. For a viewing site near you, call 800/257-2578.

MATHMAGIC
■ The Mathmagic FTP site provides math problems to challenge all levels, including higher education. (FTP://forum.swarthmore.edu/mathmagic).

WEATHER
■ A weather quiz for elementary students offers questions that change daily, furnished by the Southeast Regional Climate Center. Quizzes are scored immediately and compared with other test takers'. (http://sercc.dnr.state.sc.us/cgi-bin/wxquiz.cgi).

ABSTRACTS
■ Abstracts of some 1,300 ERIC Digests are available online and text-searchable. You can view them by visiting (http://ericir.syr.edu/ERIC/eric.html).

IDEA EXCHANGE

Pilgrim's Progress

Colonial America comes alive for my fifth-graders when I assign them to write and perform a play relating to a specific historical event.

Working in groups of five to seven students, they devote two hours a day for two weeks to the project. They show great ingenuity, preparing ships out of butcher paper and cardboard and fashioning historically accurate costumes.

Each group gets 10 to 15 minutes to perform its play before our class. One play based on the Boston Massacre combined an inventive script with the sound effects of guns and grenades, and the reality of a massive snowball fight.

The kids have fun as they hone their art, history, language arts, and reading skills.

Lori Hays
Sunset Elementary School
Airway Heights, Washington

A Matter of Density

My eighth grade science students enjoy this simple demo when we're studying characteristics of mass.

Hide a ping-pong ball about two inches deep in a clear container full of rice puffs. Place a golf ball on top of the puffs and tell the class that you can change the golf ball into a ping-pong ball. Shake the container rapidly while chanting (chanting optional). In a few

seconds, the golf ball sinks while the ping-pong ball rises to the top.

Why does this happen? The golf ball is denser than the puffs, while the ping-pong ball is less dense.

Sean Elkins
Bowling Middle School
Owenton, Kentucky

How Much Is a Million?

My second graders decided to explore that question by setting out to collect 1 million buttons. In only four months, a million buttons had poured in, weighing some 1,600 pounds.

We started by sending letters to our local newspaper. Then my homeroom wrote to button companies and schools.

Buttons came in from every state. One man in New York sent us more than 700 pounds of buttons. Senior citizens gave us buttons from cherished pieces of clothing. We received pearl buttons, puka shell buttons, even a 200-year-old iron button.

The industrial arts students at Vernon High School created a 285,200 cubic foot plexiglass container to house our super collection.

Ellen Dambach
Rolling Hills School
Vernon, New Jersey

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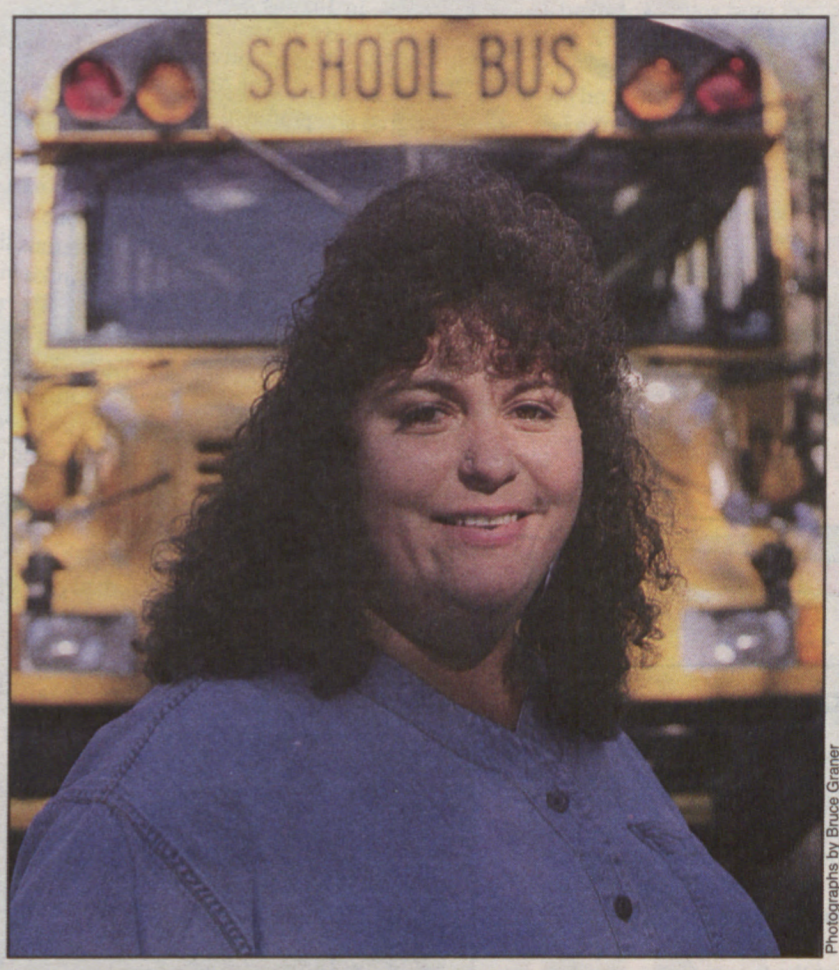
SoundOff

Drive A Mile IN MY SHOES!



Photographs by Bruce Graner

The next time you drive across town, put 65 kids who don't like one another in your back seat and have a good day!

By Tami Buzbee

I'm a school bus driver. It's my job to get your kids to school safely and on time. But sometimes things don't go according to plan. To understand why, I ask you to drive a mile in my shoes.

It's 6:20 in the morning. You arrive at the first bus stop and wait while Gary runs out of his house, putting on his shirt and shoes while eating a Pop-Tart.

You're now one minute late, as every student for the rest of the load will remind you. Remember, these are high school students (VIPs), and they don't like to be kept waiting.

After high school comes the elementary route. Susie's so tiny she can barely get up the steps. On the way to her seat, Mikey trips her (accidentally on purpose). Now Susie is crying and has a bloody lip. Everyone else thinks that Mikey is cute and is laughing and making fun. By the time you've stopped the bleeding and controlled the situation, you're on to the next stop—only to meet furious parents wanting to know why the bus is late.

Finally you get to school and unload your students.

Now it's time for that long-awaited coffee break at Hardee's. You meet up with other bus drivers there and let off steam. Suddenly a cloud fills the room and fear descends on the drivers. It's time to drive the middle school route.

You start this route to find neighbors are fussing because the kids have run up in their yard chasing a football—and trampled the new flower bed it took 12 hours to plant. These kids see no harm in this. Guess what? You're late again.

Since these are middle-schoolers, they don't care that you're late. In fact, they're happy to arrive late to school. Still, each of them will demand an explanation and apology.

The morning is over. But don't relax. The afternoon routes are the reason we fight for a raise every year.

At 1:30, you get to your elementary school and these little darlings board the bus. It's the second day of school, and by now you know all 65 kids by name and all the bus stops (not). They all get on, get in their assigned seats, and behave themselves (not).

Half of them don't like their seat location, and the other half don't like who they're sitting with. You see, you had seated them with friends, but Mom asked you to put them with their brothers, and now they don't like them either.

Charles has five papers to bring home to be signed, one of them graded an *F*. These papers will never make it home or to the trash can. That's right, all children know that *F*s must be thrown out the window.

As you reach the next stop, Daniel sees that his Mom isn't home, so he ain't going home either—he's only five. He slides down in the seat crying. At the end of your route, you realize you aren't alone. You stop the bus and find Daniel and assure him he will not be left alone. You take him back to school.

By the time you get there, his Mom is already there. She blames you for making Daniel cry. Mom was home—her car is in the shop—and she wants to know why you wouldn't let Daniel off the bus. You are now late again.

On to high school—the students board. This is a great group. No need to explain anything to them, because they already know everything. They board quickly and want to get home. Of course, as is their duty, they respectfully remind you that you're late.

Then comes the middle school. These kids are supposed to be boarding, but instead they're visiting with everyone at school. When the bell rings and buses crank up, they all come running.

You have to stop again, since you only have 20 of the 65 kids on board. Boarding will take awhile—you only have 22 seats and everyone wants one to themselves.

Now you're finally loaded, late, and on your way. Two minutes away from school, Nelson pulls out his horn to play a tune. You ask him to put it away and he does so right away (not).

Tim has made paper poppers (a class project, I'm sure) and passed them out on the bus. Eddie and Steve have a spitball contest, while Greg and Zach are throwing paper out the windows at cars, *F*s no doubt. By now you're looking strange. You no longer know where you are or where you're going. You just want to get there.

At 3:30 in the afternoon, another middle school bus has a flat tire and you've been called to help. You're burning up, wet from sweat, and eager to help. Yeah, right. But this is your job. You go pick up these kids and they're angry, wild, late, and very hot. Now everything is your fault, and they've stretched their imaginations for things to do to you.

They finally get home. You go home to your own kids, and it hits you: Parenting's a lot like driving a bus. It's frustrating, the rewards are few, and the pay's low. But do we love it? You bet we do—and the children, too!

*Children's names have been changed to protect the not-so-innocent.

Tami Buzbee is an Escambia County (Florida) school bus driver and a member of the Escambia Education Support Personnel Association.

People

Chris Hartlove

Woodworking Wonders

In **Joanne Antkowiak**'s nimble hands, scraps of plywood and other throwaway goods become mobile carts, wheelchair trays, and rhythm sticks.

This adaptive equipment for handicapped students can cost hundreds of dollars. But Antkowiak, a special education teacher for children with severe and profound handicaps at Ruth P. Eason School in Millersville, Maryland, makes her own.

By sanding, routing, drilling, and nailing—woodworking skills she learned from her husband a dozen years ago—she's cut equipment costs for her program down to the bone.

By adding castaway materials like wheels donated by wheelchair vendors and tennis ball canisters, Antkowiak makes what she modestly calls "simple products that work."

The payoff comes from the "beaming smiles" of her students when they use the equipment to do tasks for themselves.

"As long as you're creative and have the adaptive equipment," Antkowiak asserts, "all students, regardless of their mental or physical handicap, can participate in every aspect of life."

A Whole New Program

"When the district introduced computers to schools," recalls **True Kong**, "I just happened to be one of the few people who attended the class."

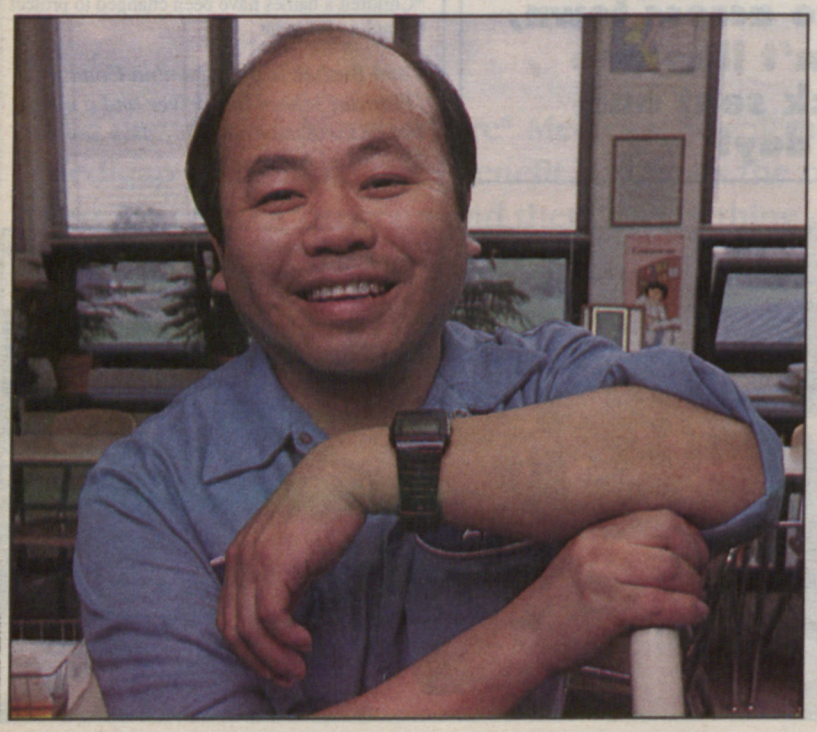
Seems this Barrington (Illinois) Middle School custodian met his calling there. He's now a whiz at computer programs, known throughout the school for his willingness to go above and beyond the call of duty to help those less computer savvy.

One evening, after toiling for four hours over the layout of the school newspaper, seventh grade language arts teacher Diane Kostik enlisted Kong's help. Within 30 minutes, he showed her a new way to align the paper's ads.

"These teachers are like family to me," says Kong. "I want to help out."

When Kong's not working or caring for his six children, he's reading computer magazines, trying new programs on his own Mac Power PC, designing his church newsletter, or making certificates for students.

"True teaches you so you can solve the problem and understand what you did wrong," says Kostik. "He's really a teacher and a valuable asset to this school."



Michelle Litvin

Dorothea B. Edgington

They Shoe Horses...

Don't they? Yes, they still do. And "they" includes South Dakota teacher **Ellen Ballard**.

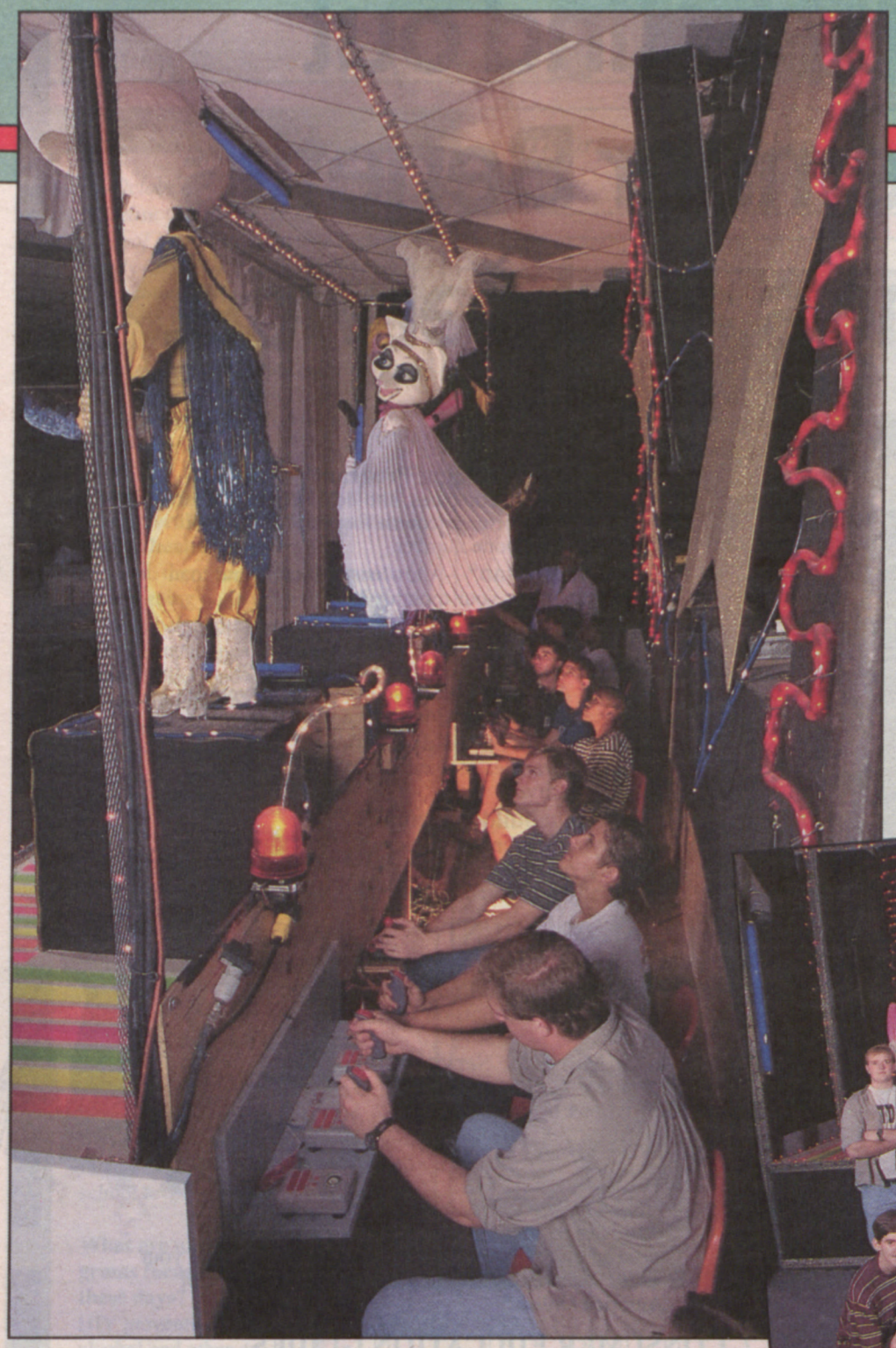
When she's not teaching computer science, speech, and English at Custer High School, Ballard works as a farrier—a horse shoer—for riders in the rugged Black Hills.

Equipped with hammer and anvil, Ballard custom fits and finishes "contact shoes," which come in different sizes and different shapes, for front and hind legs. Then she nails them on. The farrier's trade requires both a knowledge of basic horse mechanics and important variables like hoof angles—and a deft touch with horses.

"You need to know a lot about anatomy," she explains, "to make it easier for the horse to travel."

And horse shoers, like school employees, also need to know a bit of psychology.

"Horses are no different than kids," this veteran teacher observes. "They have different dispositions, personalities, and mentalities. You discipline them just like kids."



The Joysticks of Learning

Move over, Disney World—the competition's here.

Just a few miles from the famous Florida tourist spot is Lake Powell High School, where **John Grago's** power technology students put on a song-and-dance show that's wowing visitors and the media.

Who's singing and dancing? Robotic animal characters the students make from scavenged parts and then manipulate with switches and joysticks. The show's an advertisement for "class work in the year 2000 and beyond," says Grago.

As part of the two-year project, Grago's students make robot components at their workbenches and run electrical and pneumatic lines to the assembled "creatures" on a stage above. With synchronization, the animals appear to interact with human beings—just like on Sesame Street.

Grago's elective class draws both slow learners and AP students.

"There's a place for everybody here," he says. "I had one student who was flunking everything. But when he saw the attention this project was getting on TV, he got high enough grades to qualify for sports. It's turned his life around."

Photographs by Tom Burton

Celebration Time

Call Portland, Oregon educator **Ken Berry** the Cecil B. DeMille of Martin Luther King, Jr., celebrations.

In January, Berry produced and directed a seven-hour tribute to King involving 1,000 performers, a live audience of 4,000 people, and a radio and television audience of hundreds of thousands across the state.

The price of admission: two cans of food for the local food bank.

The event, "Keep Living the Dream," has become a community tradition. "People look at it as an opportunity to renew their commitment to the principles of community and family," says Berry.

Berry founded and runs a local foundation dedicated to African-American history and art. And he still makes time for his music. He's shown here at a concert at the New Hope Missionary Baptist Church.

"It's definitely a full plate," he acknowledges. "But I have a strong base of support, and we all work together."

Shane Young

Cut this out to find out why NEA Member Benefits means savings and service.

What you see are valuable group programs for members—from affordable insurance to convenient credit. Developed by the NEA, they can help you and your family get more out of life and your hard-earned money.

Please check the programs for which you'd like to receive more information. Then fill in your name and address below and mail this entire page to: **NEA Member Benefits, P.O. Box 576, Oakland, MD 21550-9972.**

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TFM026

Health

Information about health factors that affect the way students learn

Check-Up

A recent study puts school health programs on the examining table.

In October, the federal Centers for Disease Control (CDC) released the School Health Policies and Programs Study (SHPPS). This is the first study to examine school health programs at the state, district, and school levels. Laura Kann, project director for this School Health Policies and Programs Study, discussed the highlights recently with NEA Today *staffer Karen Gutloff.*

What does the study tell us about the general state of this country's school health programs?
Overall, there are some very good things going on in schools relating to student health programs. Clearly a solid foundation is in place at the state, district, and school levels. Large numbers of states, for example, currently employ directors of health education, physical education, health services, and food service. From this we can build better programs. It may not be exactly as we want it, but there's no need to hang our head at the state of things right now.

What was most surprising about school health programs?
I'd have to say, the number of school health professionals who don't have degrees in their respective fields. Only 5.4 percent of all health education classroom teachers majored in health education. Consequently, people are spending a lot of time doing in-service training at the district and school levels.

What are most school health programs focusing on these days?
HIV prevention and alcohol and other drug prevention are the two topics that are taught in more than three-quarters of school health classes. I don't think that's any accident. Federal funds have been directed toward those two areas over the past decade. Since they're critical issues, there's no complaint. But there are some very other important issues that contribute to the leading causes of death and disability that aren't being addressed.

What topics are being left out?
We found that school health programs may not adequately address several of the most serious public health problems that afflict kids today. Violence, unintentional motor vehicle injuries such as automobile crashes, and unintended pregnancies, for example, are, to a large extent, not addressed.

Does this contribute to the increased number of teen pregnancies?
School health programs are only one solution to the teen pregnancy problem. We can't make schools solely responsible. All I'm saying is that's one of the areas that schools are not stressing as much as they could be.

How do schools fare when it comes to addressing teen smoking?
Sixty-four percent of all states require districts or schools to have a policy prohibiting tobacco use among students. But while states are providing strong leadership to help districts and schools address alcohol and other drug use among students, they are providing less leadership to help districts and schools address tobacco use. The same holds true for school health policies about violence.

What impact can this study have on health programs now in place?
We hope the results of this study will be used to spur improvements and motivate districts and schools to develop new and better health education programs and policies. For one, schools can look at developing better trained health teachers and more comprehensive coverage of student health topics.

School Health Programs At A Glance

➤ 90.2 percent of all states and 90.8 percent of all districts require schools to offer health education.

➤ 73.1 percent of all middle/junior high schools and 83.9 percent of all senior high schools require at least one health education course.

➤ During the past two years, more states offered in-service training on HIV prevention and alcohol and drug use prevention than on any other health services topic.

➤ Little coordination exists between the school cafeteria and classroom nutrition education.

➤ States, districts, and schools provide students with less exposure to physical education than called for in the national health objectives for the year 2000.

➤ 57.3 percent of all schools have the services of a registered nurse on at least a part-time basis.

➤ Physical education courses are more likely to focus on competitive team sports than lifetime fitness activities.

➤ 40 percent of all states require districts and schools to have policies prohibiting violence among students.

Resources:

➤ A report of the Student Health Policies and Programs Study appears in the October 1995 issue of the *Journal of School Health*. Free copies are also available from the CDC. Contact Laura Kann at Division of Adolescent and School Health, Centers for Disease Control, 4770 Buford Highway, N.E., MS-K33, Atlanta, GA 30341-3724, 770/488-5330.

➤ *Respect Yourself, Protect Yourself,* a series of public service announcements featuring several young adults speaking candidly about preventing HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases, is available from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and the Centers for Disease Control. Contact: Myrna Taylor Ransom, Prevention Communications Branch, National Center for HIV, STD and TB Prevention, CDC, 4770 Buford Highway, N.E., Atlanta, GA, 30341-3724, 404/639-0956.

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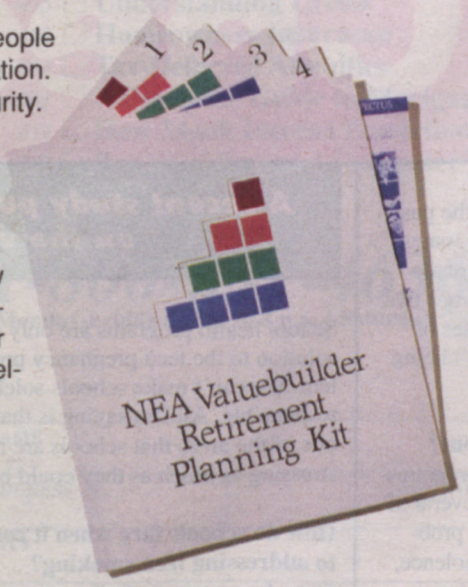

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TVB026

YOUR NEA

A Report from NEA Secretary-Treasurer Marilyn Monahan

As NEA Secretary-Treasurer, I am happy to present to you a summary of our audited financial statements for the fiscal year ended August 31, 1995.

Once again NEA experienced a positive year in 1994-95. Not only did we increase membership by adding 46,000 new members to our organization, but we also added $3,300,000 to our total fund balance as a result of net revenues exceeding expenses. This growth adds strength to our already fiscally sound organization and enables us to continue to meet our members' needs and fulfill our mission. Each of you should be very proud of these accomplishments.

The auditor's opinion letter issued with these statements summarized their engagement and stated that their work was performed in accordance with generally accepted auditing standards. It was a "clean opinion" issued without any qualifying comments. An unqualified opinion is the best kind of opinion letter to receive.

The Balance Sheet presented recaps the Association's assets, liabilities and fund balance as of August 31, 1995. One important indicator of an organization's strength is its Current Ratio. This ratio is determined by comparing our Current Assets (what we own) with our Current Liabilities (what we owe). The ratio should be at least 2:1, that is, $2 of current assets for each $1 of current liabilities. NEA meets this criterion. The Fund Balance (the difference between total assets and total liabilities) is another such indicator. It should be a positive balance and sufficient not only to stabilize an organization in troubled times, but also to serve as a source of funds for special projects, future growth, and other fiscal demands as deemed appropriate. NEA's combined Fund Balance is over $43 million, a level at which we can take both pride and comfort.

The General Operating Fund Statement of Activity reflects total Revenue received and Expenses by Center. The Net Excess of Revenue Over Expenses has been added to our Fund Balance.

Membership growth, fiscal stability, and sound allocation of NEA's resources combined to make 1994-95 another outstanding year for NEA.

(Note: A complete copy of our audit report is available upon request.)

Marilyn Monahan

National Education Association Of The United States
Balance Sheet (Combined)
As Of August 31, 1995

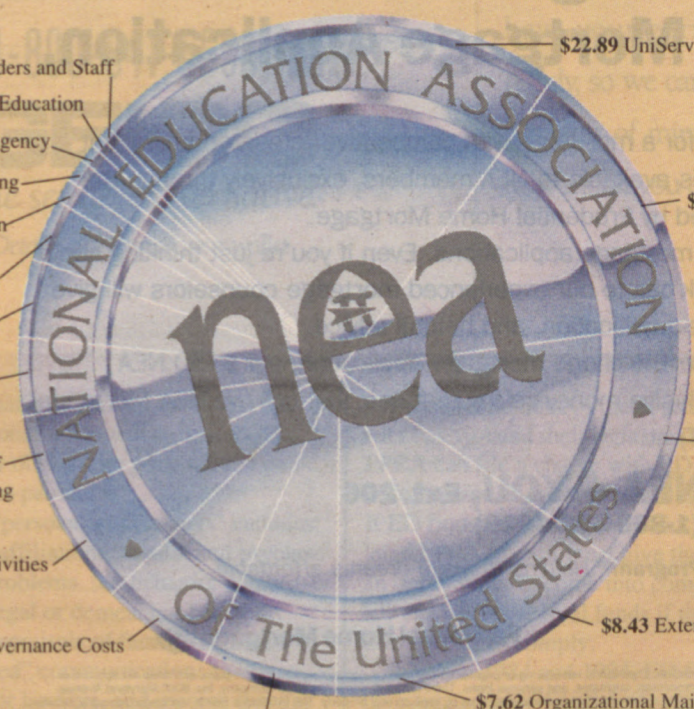
ASSETS	GENERAL FUND	SPECIAL PURPOSE FUND	CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT FUND	1995 TOTAL FUNDS	1994 TOTAL FUNDS
Current assets:	$ 48,262,649	$ 9,165,345	—	$ 57,427,994	$ 54,313,918
Long-term assets:	10,606,705	5,925,360	$ 64,726,576	81,258,641	83,558,374
Total Assets	$ 58,869,354	$ 15,090,705	$ 64,726,576	$ 138,686,635	$ 137,872,292
Current liabilities:	$ 19,623,981	$ 2,676,062	$ 1,112,211	$ 23,412,254	$ 25,373,868
Long-term liabilities:	20,375,202	5,778,021	46,068,029	72,221,252	72,752,106
Total Liabilities	39,999,183	8,454,083	47,180,240	95,633,506	98,125,974
Fund Balances	18,870,171	6,636,622	17,546,336	43,053,129	39,746,318
Total Liabilities & Fund Balances	$ 58,869,354	$ 15,090,705	$ 64,726,576	$ 138,686,635	$ 137,872,292

National Education Association Of The United States
General Operating Fund
Statements of Activity
for the years ended August 31, 1995 and 1994

	1995 BUDGET	1995 ACTUAL	1994 ACTUAL
Total revenue	$ 179,157,000	$ 181,563,387	$ 175,165,608
Expenses by center:			
Center for Advocacy	37,076,435	35,210,262	35,516,001
Center for Membership and Affiliates	63,264,214	64,396,480	61,530,235
Center for Policy and Strategic Planning	15,655,116	15,776,940	15,438,143
Center for Public Affairs	25,787,260	26,148,248	25,102,884
Center for Teaching and Learning	8,175,336	7,954,884	6,858,598
Center for Administration and Finance	28,891,349	29,982,079	28,485,129
Total expenses	178,849,710	179,468,893	172,930,990
Excess of revenue over expenses	$ 307,290	$ 2,094,494	$ 2,234,618

MEMBERSHIP DUES

The following is a breakdown of how NEA dues dollars are allocated to support and represent its members and affiliates in their efforts to achieve the mission of the NEA.* $104.00 NEA Dues (Active member, professionally employed)



$.63 Training of Elected Leaders and Staff
$.67 Preserving and Advancing Public Education
$.83 Contingency
$1.14 Direct Participation in Collective Bargaining
$1.15 National Foundation for the Improvement of Education
$3.25 Human and Civil Rights Advocacy and Awareness
$3.90 Advocate Research
$4.13 Data Processing Capabilities
$4.79 Direct Participation in the Improvement of Teaching and Learning
$5.72 Legislative and Political Activities
$6.06 Governance Costs
$7.15 Business and Finance Services
$7.62 Organizational Maintenance Costs
$8.43 External Public Relations and Internal Communications
$12.30 Strengthen the Effectiveness of Locals
$13.34 Legal Defense
$22.89 UniServ Staffing Program

* Refer to the NEA Handbook for the NEA mission statement and strategic objectives

RESOURCES

TV Tips

Communication: The Human Imperative—*The Mind Extension University Network, Friday, January 26, 7-8 p.m. ET.* This 13-part series on the evolution of communication tools and the legacy they have created premieres with an examination of the history of photography.

Katie and Orbie—*PBS, Sundays, beginning January 28, 1 p.m. ET.* Based on the award-winning books created by Susan and Ben Wicks, this animated preschool series features five-year-old Katie, who explains the world to Orbie, her newfound friend from another planet.

The United States of Poetry—*PBS, February, check local listings for time and date.* Each episode of this innovative five-part series, which captures more than 60 poets, centers on a single theme: The Land and the People, A Day in the Life, The American Dream, Love and Sex, and The Word.

Act Against Violence: Help Wanted—*PBS, Saturday, February 3, check local listings for time.* This live national broadcast adds entertainment, information, and inspiration to its call for volunteers to help curb youth violence.

Shakespeare: The Animated Tales—*HBO, Sunday, February 4, 7:30-8 p.m. ET.* Shakespeare's famous dramatic study of jealousy and its tragic effect is portrayed in this animated tale of Othello, the Moorish general of Venice, his wife, Desdemona, and his villainous advisor Iago.

Last Feast of the Crocodiles—*NBC, Wednesday, February 7, 8 p.m. ET.* This National Geographic special documents the struggle among the animals left in South Africa's Kruger National Park's dying water pools after the 1991 drought there.

Close-Up: Affirmative Action Under Fire—*C-Span, Monday, February 12, check local listings for time.* Members of this live, interactive panel discuss the fate of affirmative action in this country.

So You Want to Be a Writer?—*The Achievement Television Network via satellite or the Mind Extension University cable network, Wednesday, February 14, noon-1 p.m.* This show features students from across the country talking with prize-winning journalists, novelists, and poets about their personal experiences, struggles, and achievements. For curriculum materials with satellite coordinates, call 800/554-4226.

Tales from the Brothers Grimm—*TLC, Tuesday, February 27, 4-5 a.m.* This animated series brings illustrator Eric Carle's stories to life, offering children a look at a bygone world with morals that pertain to modern life.

These listings are provided by KIDSNET, a Washington, D.C.-based clearinghouse for children's programming.

Ahead on *Teacher TV*

Looking for some proven classroom strategies? Then tune in to *Teacher TV*, the award-winning weekly magazine-style program coproduced by NEA and the Learning Channel. *Teacher TV* airs Sundays at 12:30 p.m. E.T. This month:

January 28: Active Learning
February 4: Appreciating Diversity
February 11: Violence in the Schools
February 18: Students and Teachers as Researchers
February 25: Getting Resources into the Classroom

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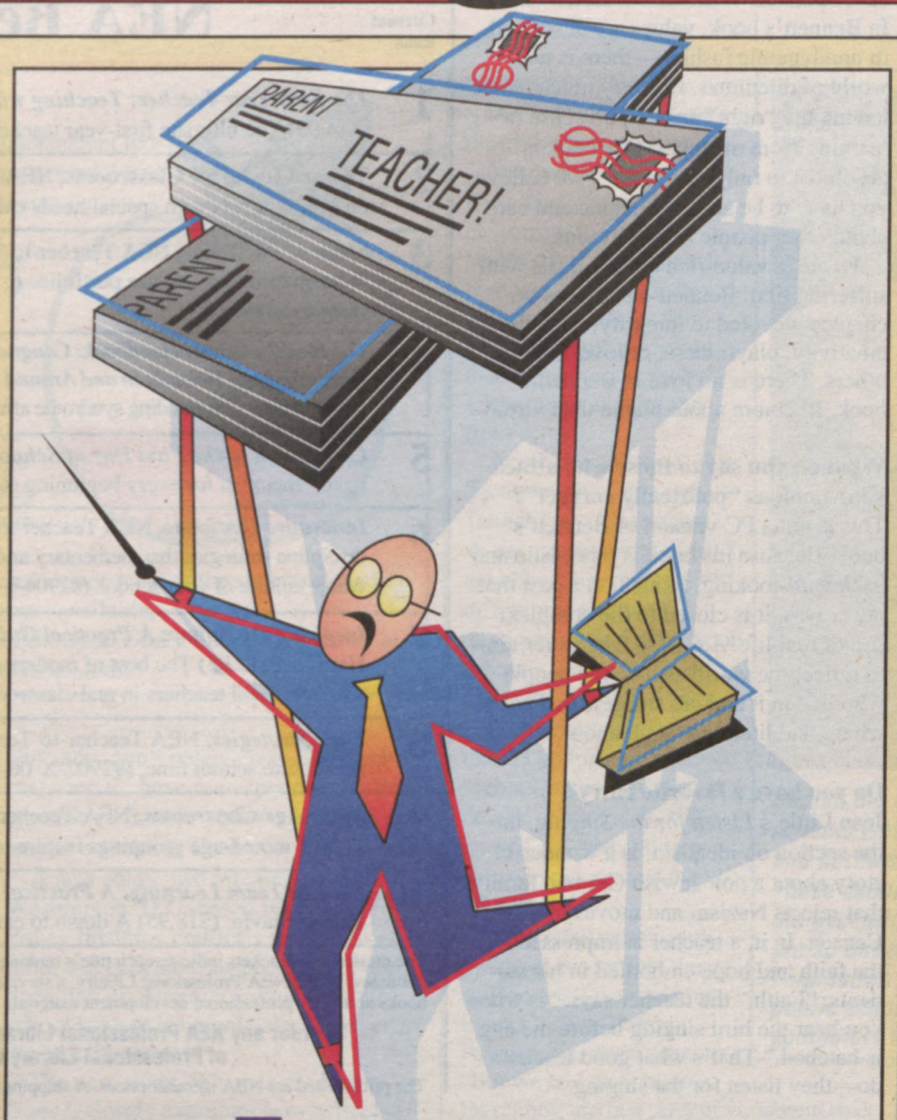
Legal



What's a Teacher To Do?

Parents all over the country are demanding that their children be excused from any class in which controversial issues are discussed. Does federal law really give parents that right?

First of a two-part series.

You may have already received one of the form letters.

A parent writes to the superintendent or building principal and sends you, the teacher, a copy.

The letter says that the parent is exercising his/her rights under federal law, citing Title 20 of the U.S. Code section 1232h. The parent demands that "my child be involved in NO school activities or materials [including] curricula, textbooks, audio-visual materials, or supplementary assignments [involving the topics] listed below unless I have first reviewed all the relevant materials and have given my written consent for their use."

One form letter that surfaced in Utah lists 111 taboo subjects including: "Values Clarification," "Creative Problem Solving," "Self-Evaluation," "Moral Education," "Open-ended Discussion," "Astrology," "Drug Education," and "Group Dynamics."

Another of the more popular form letters is promoted nationwide by Phyllis Schlafly and the Eagle Forum. That letter cites the same statute but lists only 94 topics to which the student may not be exposed, including: "globalism curricula," "divorce," "roles of males and females," "the idea that man has developed from previous or lower types of living things," "autobiography assignments," "zig-zag," and "sociograms."

What federal law are they talking about, and does it really give parents the right to have their children excused from any assignment or class they deem objectionable?

The law is called the Protection of Pupil Rights Amendment (PPRA) and was originally enacted by Congress in 1978. It's sometimes referred to as the Hatch Amendment. Amended by Congress in 1994, PPRA also is known as the Grassley Amendment, after its sponsor, Sen. Charles Grassley (R.-Iowa).

The Amendment's proponents tout it as a means for parents to control their children's education and limit what schools can teach. They are wrong.

While PPRA does give parents some rights, it has an extremely narrow scope.

First—and most important—PPRA applies *only* to a "survey, analysis, or evaluation" at the K-12 level that is funded by the U.S. Department of Education (ED). In other words, PPRA applies only if ED paid for the development or administration of the instrument.

PPRA has two substantive provisions regarding ED-funded surveys, analyses, and evaluations:

1. If a school district plans to administer such an instrument, then it must make available for parental inspection all "instructional materials" used in connection with the instrument.

2. If a school district plans to *require* students to "submit to" an ED-funded survey that asks students to reveal certain personal information, then the district must obtain "the prior written consent of the parent."

Such "personal information" includes: political affiliations, mental and psychological problems, sex behavior and attitudes, illegal or demeaning behavior, critical appraisals of family members, "privileged" communications to clergy, doctors, or lawyers, and income (except to determine eligibility for participation in certain programs).

Parents who believe that a school district has violated their rights under PPRA can file a charge with ED, which is authorized to conduct an investigation. If ED finds that a school district has violated PPRA, then it must give the district an opportunity to come into compliance. ED can cut off federal funds if the district refuses to comply.

Between 1984 and 1994, ED formally investigated only 17 alleged violations of PPRA. In connection with its enforcement responsibilities, ED has issued several private letter rulings interpreting the scope and meaning of PPRA.

ED has rejected most of the complaints because the activity at issue was not a survey, analysis, or evaluation funded by ED.

The rulings also make clear that PPRA does not apply to classroom activities such as writing assignments, discussions, and values-related exercises.

In one case, ED has said that PPRA is not violated by mandatory participation in a "Family Life Skills" course or a state-funded assessment designed to determine whether the student is "at risk" of dropping out of school.

And in a "Factsheet" issued in 1995, ED states flatly that PPRA does "not give parents or ED authority to remove, revise, or otherwise affect curricula."

In short, parents who have been told that PPRA gives them the right to inspect all instructional materials and to have their children excused from classes and assignments that cover objectionable topics have been given bad legal advice.

But that fact has not stemmed the tide of such parental demands based on an erroneous reading of PPRA.

The Schlafly form letter, for example, ends with a demand that the school district send the parent "a substantive response to this letter" and "notify all my child's teachers" of the parent's demand.

What do you do if your principal hands you one of these PPRA letters and asks you to reply? You might try this:

"I'm pleased that you took the time to write about your concern over Jane's classes. I don't anticipate that we will be covering any of the topics listed in your letter. Parents' night is in two weeks, and I would like to extend a special invitation for you to come by so that we can meet in person. Jane's textbook and supplemental reading list will be available for you and other parents to review. If you can't make it on that date, I will be glad to set up a conference one day after school."

In response to a number of inquiries from members and affiliates, the NEA Office of General Counsel joined with its counterpart at the National School Boards Association (NSBA) in preparing a lengthy legal analysis of what PPRA does and does not require. That analysis is available to NSBA members and has been sent to all NEA state affiliates.

Perhaps because PPRA is of such limited scope, a new grassroots movement has recently emerged dedicated to giving parents veto power over what their children can be taught in the public schools.

Called the "Parental Rights Amendment," proposed legislation to accomplish this goal already has been introduced in a number of state legislatures, and a similar bill is now pending in Congress. This legislation—which would have a dramatic impact on how schools function—will be the subject of next month's Legal column.

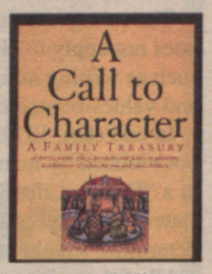
—Michael D. Simpson
NEA Office of General Counsel

BOOK BEAT

No More Choking

Finally, a book on values that doesn't make you want to gag.

A Call to Character: A Family Treasury
Colin Greer, Herbert Kohl, editors
HarperCollins, 456 pp., $25



This past Thanksgiving, HarperCollins released a "family reader"—a collection of some 200 stories, fairy tales, poems, and fables designed to help parents teach values to their children. A Call to Character *features authors ranging from Helen Keller to Langston Hughes, Shakespeare to A.A. Milne.* NEA Today *assistant editor Stefanie Weiss recently spoke with editor Colin Greer.*

What is it that spurred you to write this book?
A Call to Character is a challenge to the Right's control of the values issue. It's our way, as progressives, of entering the national debate around values. Character is when values add up to a whole person.

How is this book different from *The Book of Virtues* by Reagan's Secretary of Education William Bennett?
In Bennett's book, values are described in nondynamic fashion—there is no world of dilemmas. It's very much about having the "right" answer, no sense of learning from mistakes. Our book is absolutist in only one sense—we believe you have to be able to imagine and care about other people to be virtuous.

To me, a value-rich culture deals with suffering first. Bennett's book has no chapters devoted to integrity, empathy, creativity, playfulness, or love—among others. There is no love in Bennett's book. It's more about blame than virtue.

What do you say to those who attack your book as "politically correct"?
This is not a PC version of Bennett's book. Because his book is moralistic and backward-looking, fixated on a past that never was, it is closed to the complexities of real life. *A Call to Character* aims to reflect the world as it is, the people who live in it and are struggling. That's what great literature is all about.

Do you have a favorite entry?
Jean Little's *Listen for the Singing*, in the section on idealism, is a wonderful story about a non-Jewish German family that rejects Nazism and moves to Canada. In it, a teacher is impressed by the faith and hope embodied in his students. "Faith," the teacher says, "is when you hear the bird singing before the egg is hatched." That's what good teachers do—they listen for the singing.

The NEA Professional Library's Top Ten
NEA Bestsellers

Current Rank		Previous Rank
1	***The First Year Teacher: Teaching with Confidence (K-8),*** Bosch & Kersey. ($14.95) The ultimate first-year teacher's handbook. (#1862-1-10-FB)	[3]
2	**Toward Inclusive Classrooms,** NEA Teacher-to-Teacher Books. ($9.95) Stories on how students with special needs can learn with their peers. (#2903-8-00-FB)	[5]
3	**Student Portfolios,** NEA Teacher-to-Teacher Books. ($9.95) Insights from your colleagues on how to use portfolios to assess and enhance student learning. (#2901-1-00-FB)	[2]
4	***The Healthy School Handbook: Conquering the Sick Building Syndrome and Other Environmental Hazards In and Around Your School,*** Norma L. Miller, ed. ($21.95) Find out how sick-building syndrome affects teaching and learning. (#1863-X-20-FB)	[6]
5	***Countdown to the First Day of School,*** Schell & Burden. ($4.95) A "must-have" checklist for every beginning elementary teacher. (#2150-9-00-FB)	[1]
6	***Innovative Discipline,*** NEA Teacher-to-Teacher Books. ($9.95) Innovative discipline strategies that elementary and secondary teachers say can change the whole culture of your school. (#2904-6-00-FB)	[4]
7	***Inspiring Discipline: A Practical Guide for Today's Classrooms,*** Merrill Harmin. ($12.95) The best of modern theory and research in a form that works for real teachers in real classrooms. (#2950-X-00-FB)	[10]
8	***Time Strategies,*** NEA Teacher-to-Teacher Books. ($9.95) Ways busy teachers restructure school time. (#2902-X-00-FB)	
9	***Multi-Age Classrooms,*** NEA Teacher-to-Teacher Books. ($9.95) Six examples of how mixed-age groupings inspire teachers to innovate. (#2907-0-00-FB)	[6]
10	***Student Team Learning: A Practical Guide to Cooperative Learning, 3rd Ed.,*** Robert Slavin. ($18.95) A down to earth approach. (#1845-1-00-FB)	

The numbers in brackets indicate each title's rankings last month, if any. All the books listed above are published by the NEA Professional Library, a service for NEA members financed solely by the sale of books and other professional development materials to the education community.

To order any NEA Professional Library bestseller—or receive a free catalog of Professional Library titles—call 800/229-4200.

The prices listed are NEA member prices. A shipping/handling charge will be added to each order.

EDUCATION MARKETPLACE

FELLOWSHIPS

Summer Fellowship on Teaching Holocaust and Jewish Resistance. Overseas seminar for secondary school teachers, who are able to implement Holocaust studies in their classrooms, July 2-26, 1996 in Israel with a stop in Poland. Sponsored by the American Gathering of Jewish Holocaust Survivors, Jewish Labor Committee, AFT. Program includes lectures by noted scholars, visits to prominent Holocaust Institutions, excursions to historic sites. Teachers pay $2,000, covering air travel from New York, hotels, two meals a day, some trips. Application deadline: April 15. For information and application, write Jewish Labor Committee, 25 East 21st Street, New York, NY 10010.

EMPLOYMENT

Education Jobs-Nationwide. New lists weeks. K-12 & college. All subjects. Send SASE to: NESC., Dept. NEA, POB 1279, Riverton, WY 82501. 307/856-0170.

Jobs for teachers/principals. Send SASE to NTC, Box 1257, Boston, MA 02118-1257, 617/267-3204.

RESEARCH FELLOW

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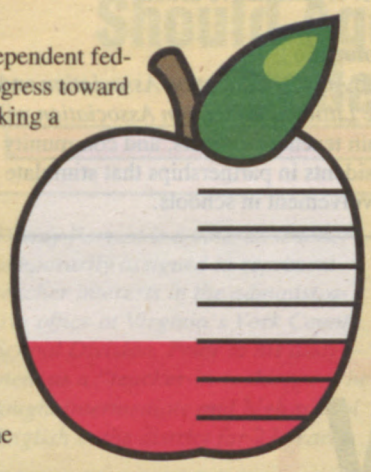
Trends

Not Quite Half-Way



The National Education Goals Panel, the independent federal agency set up to monitor the nation's progress toward the National Education Goals, says we're making a little progress.

Back in 1990, Congress, the White House, and the nation's governors agreed on a set of ambitious national goals to be met by the year 2000.

On the positive side, the Goals Panel reports that math achievement among fourth- and eighth-graders is rising. On the negative side, reading achievement among these same students shows no gain, and statistics on drug use and in-school disruptions are headed in the wrong direction.

Though the Panel calls its study a mid-term report, most of the statistics cited are from 1992 and 1993, the most current years available.

For more information about the National Education Goals, check the Internet at http://www.ed.gov/legislation/GOALS2000/index.html.

The Skinny on Spending

You're at a neighborhood gathering. Everyone's talking about an upcoming school budget vote. One neighbor is arguing loudly that local schools don't need any more funding increases.

"Why I just read," the neighbor proclaims triumphantly, "that spending for American schools has already doubled over the last 25 years—and that's after inflation!"

Critics of American public education, in Congress and in the media, have been citing this statistic regularly over the past half-dozen years. Is it accurate? Most educators don't believe so—few teachers, after all, have seen spending on their classrooms double—but they've had no way to counter it. Until now.

A new study, just released by the Washington, D.C.-based Economic Policy Institute, confirms what classroom teachers have suspected all along: Spending on America's typical public school student is up only slightly over the past 25 years.

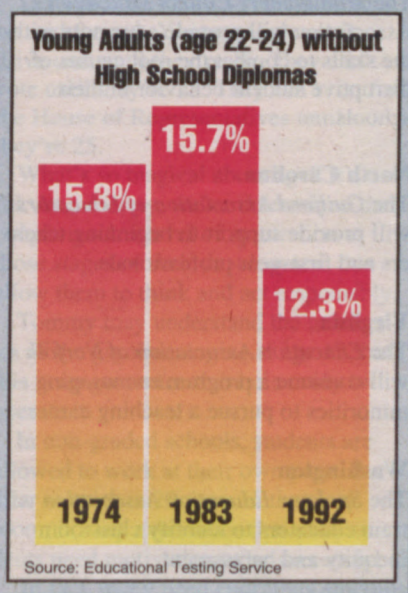
The new study, *Where's the Money Gone?*, closely examines how school districts have actually spent their revenue dollars. Per pupil expenditures for regular education, the report documents, grew by just 1 percent per year between 1967 and 1991.

What has risen substantially, notes the analysis, is spending for the education of severely handicapped and learning-disabled youngsters—up 400 percent between 1967 and 1991.

To order a copy of the study, available for $12, call 800/EPI-4844. For more information, check the EPI World Wide Web site at http://northern.lights.com/epi/index.html.

Dropouts Dropping Back

After 20 years of stagnation, there's some sign that more young people are earning high school diplomas. Nearly 400,000 students are still dropping out annually, according to the latest statistics, but about 450,000 young people are now annually earning their GED credentials. Why do students drop out? One key reason: pregnancy. Almost 40 percent of dropouts say they either had a child or were expecting one.



Where Are Kids Safe?

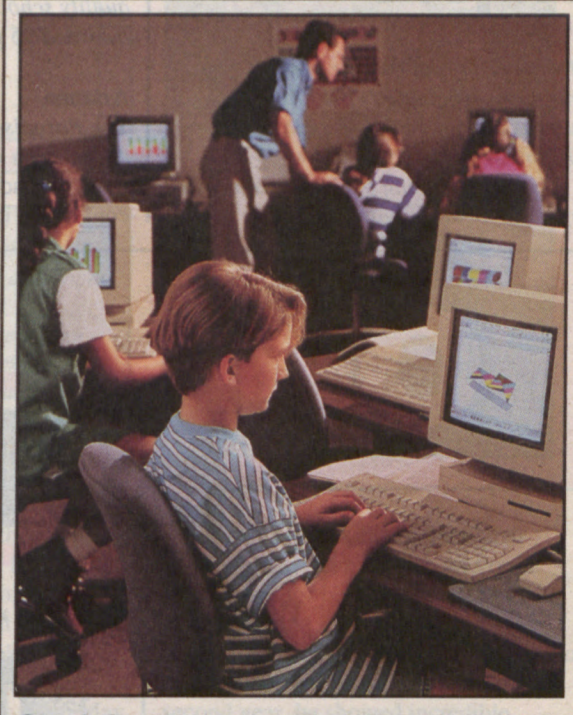
Just how unsafe are the nation's schools? A comprehensive new survey leaves the answer unclear—because researchers failed to adequately distinguish what happens inside from what happens outside school doors.

The survey, conducted for the National Center for Education Statistics, sampled 6,504 students from grades 6 through 12 in 1993. Ten percent of the nation's students, the data say, worry about being physically attacked "at school." Four percent say they have been attacked.

But just where students have been attacked isn't clear from the data. Westat, Inc., the research company that conducted the survey, defines "at school" events as events that happen both inside school as well as to and from school.

Another new study, conducted by the Office of Technology Assessment, an agency recently eliminated by Congress, does differentiate between tragedies on and off school grounds. In the 1992-93 and 1993-94 school years, OTA researchers found that 53 youngsters suffered "school-associated violent deaths" per year. In 1992, overall, 11,300 children between the ages of 5 and 19 died.

"Any child getting shot in school is a terrible thing, and we don't want to imply it's not," notes Dalton Paxman, the study director. "But we feel that children [in school] are in a safer environment than they would be out of school."



Search the nation over, and you'll see individual schools well-stocked with the computer software and hardware essential for the Information Age. These schools, unfortunately, remain much more the exception than the rule. America's schools are so underequipped, says a new Milken Family Foundation report, that wiring and outfitting every public school classroom with at least four to six computers would now cost $31.5 billion.

No Homerun Here

Is it three strikes and you're out for Education Alternatives, Inc., the company leading the charge for a corporate takeover of America's public schools?

Two years ago, the stocks of the high-flying EAI were trading at nearly $50 per share. EAI had won a contract to run—for profit—nine public schools in Baltimore, and a contract to run the entire Hartford school district in Connecticut was on the horizon.

EAI won that contract in Hartford, but since then it's been all downhill for the Minnesota-based corporation. The first strike came last year in Florida, where Dade County officials refused to renew EAI's contract to run a local elementary school.

Strike two came in Baltimore, where EAI-managed schools had shown no significant test score improvement. In November, in a decision cheered by local teachers and community groups, city officials pulled the plug on EAI, announcing they would cancel the company's contract as of March 1.

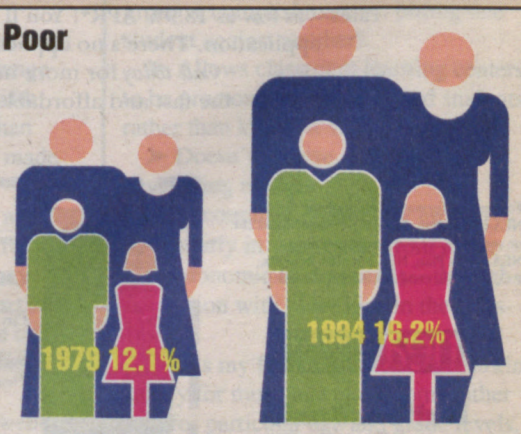
Strike three may soon be delivered in Hartford. In elections last November, opponents of the EAI contract narrowly missed winning a majority on the city's school board. EAI had promised to take profits in Hartford only from the "savings" generated by its more efficient management of city schools. The company then claimed as "savings" a new contract that froze teacher salaries.

EAI's number-crunching games don't seem to be impressing Wall Street anymore. The corporation's stock has plummeted to less than $5 a share.

Working—and Still Poor

In 1994, almost one of every six Americans working full-time didn't earn enough money to lift a family of four out of poverty.

To make matters worse, fewer full-time jobs now carry health care insurance as a benefit. The numbers of Americans without health coverage is now 40 million, up from 31 million in 1987.



Source: U.S. Census data

URBAN GRANTS

NEA Funds 15 Local Action Projects

If you need proof that the best reform initiatives originate at the grassroots, just take a look at the Association's Urban Grant list for 1995.

These 15 winning projects, proposed by large local affiliates, will each receive $3,000 from NEA's Center for the Revitalization of Urban Education. The grants will be used to improve teaching and learning and support quality schools. Since 1985, NEA has awarded 95 grants to urban affiliates.

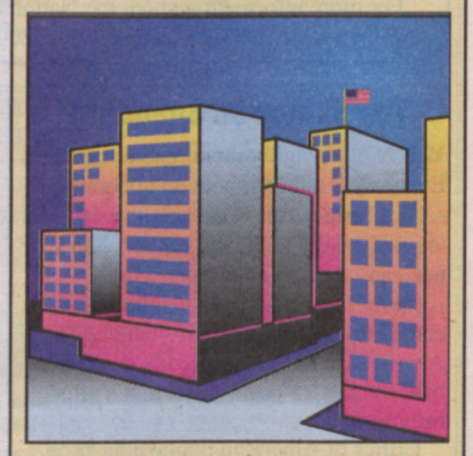
Arizona
The *Paradise Valley Education Association* will continue building coalitions with school stakeholders to restore confidence in public education.

California
The *California Faculty Association* will sponsor local events—such as debates, teach-ins, and training sessions—in support of affirmative action.

Colorado
The *Aurora Education Association* and the *Littleton Education Association* will train teachers, parents, and community residents in partnerships that stimulate involvement in schools.

Florida
The *Palm Beach County Classroom Teachers Association* will begin a campaign to make the community aware of the effectiveness of its schools and its teachers. And the *Teachers Association of Lee County* will help familiarize teachers with the assessment system now being drafted by the Florida Education Standards Commission.

Illinois
The *Schaumburg Education Association* and the *Schaumburg Education Employees Organization* will study the appropriateness of the traditional school day and year from the perspective of all stakeholders. And the *Springfield Education Association* and *Decatur Education Association* will jointly provide professional enrichment activities for teachers with up to five years of classroom experience.



Indiana
The *Indianapolis Education Association* is sponsoring a community organizing program for school improvement.

Kansas
Olathe-NEA will work jointly with the school district and Kansas-NEA to train students and staff in a safe schools program.

Kentucky
The *Jefferson County Teachers Association* will advance both parental and community involvement and professional development.

Maryland
The *Montgomery County Education Association* will provide educators with the skills to combat the root causes of disruptive student behavior in their schools.

North Carolina
The *Guilford Association of Educators* will provide support to beginning teachers and first-year professionals.

Virginia
The *Education Association of Norfolk* will continue a program encouraging minorities to pursue a teaching career.

Washington
The *Spokane Education Association* will train educators to identify classroom inequity and harassment.

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Debate

Should Age Determine Grade Level?

YES

Danny Forrest is a veteran teacher temporarily assigned to represent teacher interests in the administrative office at Virginia's York County School Division. Prior to his assignment as a "teacher-in-residence," he taught intermediate and high school English in the district for 22 years.

Imagine you're Bob, a 13-year-old boy who's only a year away from graduation. You order your class ring, but give up on getting a date for the "ring dance." The 16-year-old girls in your classes are interested in the older, more mature boys.

You join in when it comes to academic activities like debate and forensics, since you have no chance of making the basketball team—those slots are filled by the older students as well.

Socially speaking, high school is a drag for you. In fact, you're lucky to have even one close friend, since most students prefer to spend time with kids their own age.

Whoa! Here we go again. These days some claim that schools without fixed grade levels are a better way to educate young people. But non-graded schools are just an old idea re-emerging on the educational scene after an all-too-brief respite.

Experimentation may be essential for growth and success, but how many times do we have to try something before we lay it to rest?

Thirty years ago, the non-graded school was in vogue. Yet its proponents failed to prove that it was better than the graded school. Most research shows that there is very little, if any, difference between graded and non-graded schools.

Let's face it—there's something to be said for age. Young people can't drive cars until they're 16. They can't vote until they're 18. They can't run for the House of Representatives until they're 25.

What's so magical about age? It's useful. As a society, we've determined that people reach a level of maturation at those stages of their development that allow them to think and act responsibly.

Tommy may understand the mechanics of the gasoline engine at age 12, but this is no guarantee that he's ready to operate it.

In non-graded schools, students are allowed to work at their own pace. But after more than 20 years in the classroom, it's my experience that most students need motivation to be successful.

In fact, many need enormous amounts of it—which usually requires that a student, parents, and teacher work closely together. Passing from one grade to the next provides that motivation for some.

Without it, I'm afraid many students would fall behind, even fall through the cracks.

Kids need more than good teachers. They need benchmarks or hurdles that provide incentives—just like in the real world. As adults, teachers climb career ladders, those in the military move up in the ranks, and those in civil service move from one step to the next. Aren't we trying to prepare our students to move from school to the real world as life-long learners?

There are other factors to consider. Many students would probably stay in school longer if they were allowed to progress at their own pace. This is already a trend among today's college students.

The dropout rate would likely increase because slower achieving students would have little to encourage them along the way. I can only imagine what would happen to sports programs in a non-graded high school.

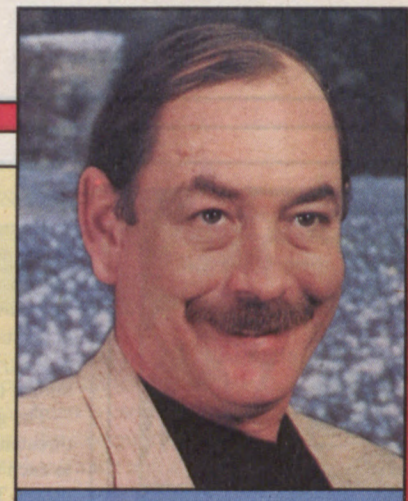
And, as a parent, would you want 19-year-old boys sharing a classroom with your 14-year-old daughter? That doesn't strike me as an environment conducive to learning.

Most teachers have received training for teaching single-grade classrooms organized around whole-class instruction. Reorganization and retraining would be costly.

Until research demonstrates sufficient evidence that non-graded education is effective, we need to seek new and innovative ways to organize our schools, not spend extra dollars on ineffective practices of the past.

I'm not against advancing students with exceptional ability. But that should be the exception, not the norm. Call me a traditionalist, but if we're going to try to reorganize our schools, let's do something that's supported by the research.

In the meantime, let's be sure to keep Tommy out of the driver's seat until he's old enough to handle it—for all our sakes.



NO

Michael Mayo, a certified elementary education teacher and a member of the Austin Association of Teachers, now works as a teaching assistant in a resource room for learning disabled students at Travis Heights Elementary School in Austin, Texas.

Why should Jonathan, who turns five just a few days after the September 1 cut-off, have to wait a year to enter kindergarten, when Becky, who turns five on August 31, doesn't?

Why should Ann, who turns 12 on May 20, have to leave fifth grade at the end of the school year, when Andy, who turns 12 just after the end of the school year, can stay in fifth grade for another year?

And what should we tell Julie's mom when she insists that Julie has the social skills, intellect, and emotional maturity to skip a grade?

Most of us agree that children don't mature at the same rate. Why, then, should they all be expected to fit into a predetermined grade-level structure?

Too often, we use the word "maturity" as a blanket term, an excuse for justifying age-to-grade placement to parents. We need to give "maturity" more respect.

Children are physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually multifaceted. Physically, a child always grows to a larger size. But mental growth is not nearly as consistent because it's closely connected to other areas, like spiritual and moral growth.

The solution to the problem of rigid age/grade structure is multi-age grouping. With multi-age grouping, there's no forcing square blocks into round holes.

My own school is now totally composed of multi-level classrooms. Our students are assigned to a "grade," but only because of preexisting standards set by the district.

We call our grades "teams," and each is named for a color. The teams range from pre-kindergarten through "fifth grade." No team includes more than three "grades"—the majority are made up of two.

Grouping children of different ages in the same classroom sure worked for a child I'll call Joey. I've known Joey most of his life, and for a good part of it, Joey was a bully. He's an average child scholastically (if there is such a thing), but, physically, he's a brute.

This physical advantage often went to his head, affecting his judgment about how to behave socially.

Joey was in a "kindergarten-first-second grade" team, which was quite appropriate for his size and mental development.

His first year was a bit shaky, with too many unneeded confrontations. In his second year, he showed incredible growth in his ability to learn by working in a small group.

Now in his third year, Joey is a shining leader. He listens well, then follows directions admirably. Best of all, he makes himself available to assist others in completing their assignments.

Because of this team approach to learning, Joey gradually and naturally accepted the responsibility of helping other students.

In a traditional school, responsibility would have been handed to him—whether he was ready or not.

My experiences as a student, teacher, and parent all convince me that a multi-age approach best serves the needs of all children, since they progress at different rates.

The multi-age classroom:

➤ Avoids retention and lets the student progress to, and even surpass, prescribed levels.

➤ Builds student self-esteem because of the different age levels involved.

➤ Lets kids teach other kids what they know, thereby reinforcing learning.

➤ Offers a more diverse curriculum than the standard classroom.

➤ Inspires team teaching, which builds unity not only among teachers, but also among students (emphasizing group accomplishment vs. pitting one student against another).

➤ Allows classroom learning centers to be proctored by experienced students rather than kids just starting out.

➤ Doesn't impose a time line for developing readers.

➤ Encourages vocabulary growth—particularly in youngsters from lower socioeconomic backgrounds—through interaction with older kids in the classroom.

Here's my final argument: Earmarking money for multi-age classrooms rather than for particular age and grade levels, lets us make the most of the limited funds available for education.

Letters

WASTE NOT

One critical piece seems to be missing from the exemplary Huntington Woods Elementary (Cover story, December). Where is the development of environmental stewardship in this picture of "the school that has everything"?

The photo of the lunchtime scene depicts a sampling of the many non-recyclable, throw-away, non-reusable containers available for lunch packaging. It appears that in attempts to foster communication and collaboration during lunch periods and to minimize problems associated with school lunch programs, Huntington Woods has ignored the need to institute a waste reduction program.

To empower children with the sense that what they do is worthwhile, they need to be able to envision a future not plagued by crippling trash disposal problems and critical shortages of resources. If students, their parents, and teachers take part in addressing these real-life problems, they will have hope for the future. Only then will the superb job that they are doing as a community take on meaning for everyone involved . . . and make a difference.

Diane St. Germain
Center Barnstead, New Hampshire
E-mail diane3301@aol.com

FAIR GAME

Is life fair? Certainly not! Are science fairs fair? Sometimes they can be, and probably more often than life, they are. Perhaps a better question for your debate (December) would be to ask what distinguishes a good fair from a bad one.

Having judged fairs, helped run them, and coached numerous student projects entered in local and international fairs, I've found that the most important contributor to quality is the experience of the fair organizers.

Science educators with significant fair experience know how to select seasoned judges who will probe beyond the superficial elements that concern the debater worried about graphics, photos, etc. Such judges seek to find the quality of science investigation or engineering design done by the student as well as how well the student understands the principles of the project, regardless of the student budget or display.

The good fair will provide non-threatening, confidential feedback to each student, regardless of any prizes. The good fair also will provide models of what quality research really looks like, opportunities for students to share project ideas, and suggestions about how students might continue to develop their project later.

For these reasons, some fairs have even moved away from the isolation of personal competition by judging projects purely on scientific criteria and separating them into three or four levels of quality. We know, for example, that it's sometimes difficult to compare two projects competitively if they are in different areas of science—for example, biology research versus engineering design. Other organizers have introduced a symposium approach to emphasize student sharing and critical thinking.

Science fairs can be worthwhile if developed with insightful planning. The value of having experienced educators involved in such planning is priceless.

Robert Latham
Alexandria, Virginia

When teaching in a middle school in Seattle, I once brought a student to a chemistry fair. Michael had practiced every other day. He worked with inadequate equipment like older faucets and Bunsen burners. But, at the fair, he had to use the equipment they supplied.

When Michael turned on their faucets, water sprayed all over his product and his neighbor's. His neighbor did the same thing. Neither of them was used to the school's new, high-powered faucets. Neither student had enough time to finish his experiment, so neither won. Inequity can occur in small ways.

Thanks for the debate. Keep publishing articles that reflect current issues that educators are dealing with everyday.

Maria Pehling
Seattle, Washington

WHAT A PAIR

The successful parent-involvement programs discussed in "Do Parents Make You Nervous?" (Cover story, November) are all dreams come true. Our Associations should offer parent involvement workshops to members as a way of exposing and introducing educators to the many diverse programs that are working.

I have never understood why teachers feel so intimidated by fellow team members/parents. For over 28 years, parent involvement has always paid large dividends for my students. Involved parents make me accountable for the education of our children. They also support me in all areas of their child's development.

Won't education be great when we see parent involvement projects come alive in every NEA school system? Our children deserve the best, and hats off to the Association schools that are delivering their best.

Mary Nicholas Lloyd-Booker
Pontiac, Illinois

REFLECTIONS

Gina Davis's article "On the Inside Looking Out" (SoundOff, November) reflects my own experiences teaching at Eastern Oregon Correctional Institution. The students were motivated, interested, and hard-working. I truly believe that education is the way to help people change their lives.

Jodie Harnden
Athena, Oregon

ACADEMIC ABUSE

Your choice of cases representing academic freedom was poor (Legal, November). Sex, violence, vulgarity, profanity, and destruction of property don't represent academic freedom.

Just because this "stuff" is a part of students' everyday lives doesn't mean we have to promote it in the schools. I, too, have used the "student-centered teaching methods" to get reluctant high school kids to write. I didn't censor the first work either, but I also didn't broadcast it.

We in the public schools are trying desperately to instill a sense of respect and decency in our students. These cases show academic abuse and extreme poor judgment on the part of the teachers involved. Let's not waste our credibility fighting for the extremists who abuse academic freedom. There are enough legitimate cases that warrant our efforts.

Dan Koch
Ellsworth, Maine

I suppose I'm extremely naive about what is currently being taught in some classrooms. When I read the Legal column, I was so disappointed to find that not only would the teacher allow vulgar language in the classroom as a way to encourage participation in skits, but that we (NEA) are supporting her lawsuit.

Getting down on the student's level is unacceptable. Vulgar language is never appropriate in any class. The same thing goes for R-rated movies in the classroom. If parents want to allow their children to see movies with bad language and sexual or violent themes, it's their choice, but we are not the ones who should be presenting it to them. We should discourage, not encourage, behaviors that are offensive to many.

When Ed Stachura was fired for showing explicit materials in sex education, I wonder if he informed the parents about what would be shown.

As teachers, we worry so much about freedoms, but we often forget about the rights of the parents to try to protect their children's innocence.

Andrea Jordan
Huntington Beach, California

TRUE REWARDS

Sure rewards do work temporarily. But for how long and at what long-term cost? It's gold stars, stickers, and treats for elementary grades, basketball tickets for Eau Claire middle school students (Letters, December), then on to what for high school students?

For those who blindly accept the easy fix of extrinsic motivators, I strongly recommend reading Alfie Kohn's book *Punished by Rewards* (Houghton Mifflin, 1993). Kohn cites numerous studies that reveal that rather than fostering intrinsic motivation, extrinsic rewards eventually devalue the very tasks, subjects, and activities they are meant to support.

Once the reward is gone, workers, students, and children no longer see any reason to continue what has become merely the means to "get the goody."

Esther Weinstein
Las Vegas, Nevada
E-mail weinstei@nevada.edu

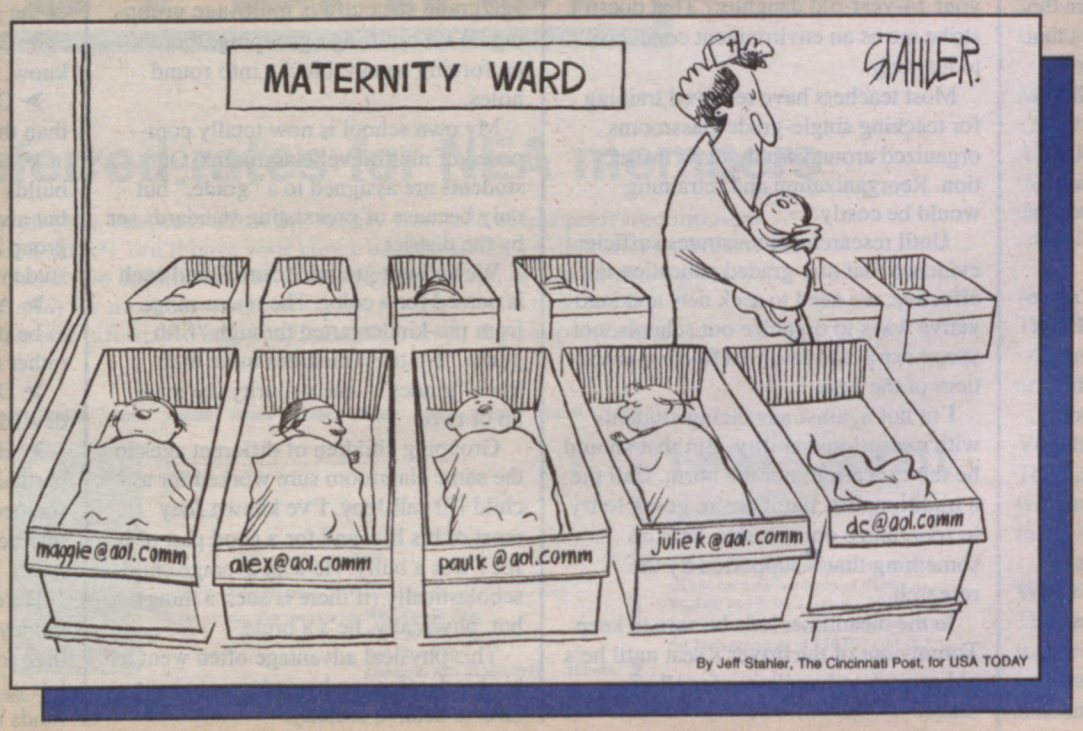
"Should Kids be Paid to be Good?" (Debate, November) was both timely and relevant to the problems of education. When we rely so heavily on extrinsic rewards to motivate children, we do more harm than good.

Is it our intent to make the reward the focus of education, or do we really want our students to value and enjoy learning for its own sake?

I agree with the debater who says that we need to nurture and further develop the intrinsic desire within our students to learn and behave responsibly. These are skills that students need to be successful in life.

Sure, the old stimulus-response approach works—we dangle a carrot and get results. But if it works so well, why are we constantly looking for newer, more powerful "carrots"? A good grade (or grade point average) used to be the "carrot" we held out. How many times are teachers confronted by students who want to know what they have to do to get an *A* or *B*? Do we want to replace that with "What do I have to do to get $10?"

When we reward students for



LETTER FROM: Kensington, New Hampshire

First in the Nation

By Christine St. Jean

As leaves fall and frost dots the last of summer's harvest, most of us in New Hampshire head for the comfort of our warm homes during long, chilly nights. Our actions mirror the changing seasons.

Once every four years, however, something special stirs the New Hampshire air. Since 1952, our state has hosted the first in the nation presidential preference primary. This unique political ritual has touched my life as a citizen and as an educator in a myriad of ways.

My first encounter with presidential primary politics in 1972 almost cost me my job. As a ninth grade civics teacher, I encouraged my students to read broadly about issues, and I set aside one day a week to examine the perspectives of many different publications, including the *New York Times*, which offered reduced student rates.

Someone anonymously contacted New Hampshire's largest publication and suggested that I offered only one point of view. Since the *New York Times* had endorsed the Democratic candidate, George McGovern, and the New Hampshire paper publicly supported Richard Nixon, the New Hampshire publication decided that my classroom provided an opportunity to challenge both McGovern and the urban press.

The New Hampshire paper ran two front-page editorials about the "exclusiveness" of my students' reading. The principal and the school board heard questions about my performance. Fortunately, cooler heads prevailed—evidence showed that I encouraged the reading of all points of view, and my job was saved.

Since 1972, I've found safer ways to approach the primary. New Hampshire's small size and laid-back manner are ideally suited for coffees where residents and candidates meet one another. I hosted such an event at my house a number of years ago and have attended many others.

When the snow blows in January, candidates flood the local scene. They appear at downtown eateries, elementary schools, Rotary Club meetings, and any number of other public gatherings. No New Hampshire voters can ever claim that they lacked the opportunity to hear a particular politician speak.

Our high school typically receives a half dozen requests for candidates or their family members to visit our classes. The father of Vice President Al Gore spoke to my students, as did Senator Paul Simon and Congressman Richard Gephardt. My students heard both President Reagan in 1984 and President Bush in 1988 when they appeared at the Town Hall.

Out of the presidential primary process, a special public-private school collaboration has been born. The private Phillips Exeter Academy now hosts candidate nights where student panelists from my school, Exeter High, Phillips Exeter, and another high school fire questions at presidential prospects. Students dine with the candidates beforehand at the Academy. The first of these sessions took place last December 6 when Alan Keyes came to town.

In addition, I decided to take advantage of New Hampshire's unique political position by drafting an assignment that required students to devote a minimum of 20 hours to a candidate's campaign. A campaign supervisor confirms the student's participation. I also asked that students keep a log and a journal of their activities.

Typically, students participate in phone banks and leaflet and literature drops throughout the Seacoast. Some serve on reception committees at large political events. One group hung a banner in support of its candidate on an Interstate 95 overpass on election day in 1988!

A few days before the primary, my students also conduct our school's mock election, with results reported to local and, sometimes, national media. Students then wrap up their efforts by submitting a paper that assesses the pros and cons of the political process based on their experiences. For a few brief months, their classroom is the world. My hope is that these lessons will last them a lifetime.

Living in New Hampshire is unique, particularly when all eyes are upon us. I've been interviewed by Japanese television and polled by the *Los Angeles Times*. We've all come to expect this as the price of being "first."

Our moment of glory is brief, however. Soon after the polls close and the victory parties end, the candidates and the media depart. New Hampshire residents are then left to reflect once more on the impact we've had on the life of the nation.

Christine St. Jean teaches honors U.S. history to juniors and humanities to seniors at Exeter Area High School in New Hampshire.

learning, the learning gets devalued and the reward becomes valued.

John Adams
New Era, Michigan

CAMPAIGN EFFORTS

I was surprised when I saw the article "A School for Iqbal" (Byte-Size, November). It featured the efforts of my students as a result of an e-mail campaign started by the student activists at Broad Meadows Middle School in Quincy, Massachusetts.

While we are proud to be a part of that campaign, the real story is the efforts that have been put forth by the students of Broad Meadows and their teacher, Ron Adams. The things we have done are ancillary to the campaign these terrific students have waged.

Gary Barron
Apple Valley, California

BOMB FOR BOMB

I wonder why Gerard Brooker (International, November) used such a negative and one-sided approach in his "quest to further the cause of peace."

Each time I read the article on his commemorative trip to Hiroshima, I wonder why Brooker and his students didn't visit the Philippines or walk the trail and talk with survivors of the Bataan Death March. I wonder why Brooker and his students didn't visit Pearl Harbor, where the Japanese bombed a sleeping population and killed hundreds and hundreds of Americans. I wonder why Brooker and his students didn't talk with survivors of the sneak attack on Pearl Harbor.

Had they done these things, perhaps Brooker and his students would have a more positive view of the war the Japanese started on December 7, 1941.

Richard Birch
Old Zollarsville, Pennsylvania

ATTACK THE WHACK

As a member of End Violence Against the Next Generation, a child advocacy group dedicated to abolishing corporal punishment in America, I must take issue with the brief article titled "The Whack Is Back" (Trends, November).

You reported that "27 states still ban corporal punishment in school. But even those who strongly oppose paddling agree that the tide may be turning against them." Nothing could be further from the truth.

A 1994 Gallup Poll surveying parents nationally said 62 percent oppose the paddling of children by teachers and administrators.

Although 23 states still allow corporal punishment, nine of the those (Arizona, Wyoming, Kansas, Oklahoma, Ohio, Pennsylvania, North Carolina, Georgia, and Florida) have banned the practice in a least half of their school districts. Pennsylvania and Missouri legislators are working on bills to abolish corporal punishment statewide.

Similarly, individual school boards across the country are following the example of Knox County School Board in Tennessee and voting to ban corporal punishment in their districts. The number of students hit by their teachers has dropped steadily each year.

If there is a "trend" involving corporal punishment, it is exactly opposite of that reported by *NEA Today*.

Mary McFetridge
North Pole, Alaska

DRESS FOR SUCCESS

Victor Scott writes that the military and private sectors function more effectively than schools do partly because of a dress code (Letters, November).

How true this is! I'm sure that many teachers remember when students and teachers alike conformed to a dress code. These were the days when the United States had the best education in the world. I remember them well.

Let's face the fact that dress is a sign of discipline, cooperation, and belonging to the social order.

Raymond Maykovich
Patton, Pennsylvania

THINK AGAIN

What were you people thinking? That the leadership of the NEA even allowed the "gay issue" to come to a vote at this time of political division over public education leaves me shaking my head. You allowed the NEA to play right into the hands of the religious right and other critics of public education.

You have alienated many political moderates who are religious and believe that homosexual behavior is not normal.

You have highlighted an issue that simply did not have to be put into the spotlight—and certainly not at this time!

Not to mention that new speculation now will arise concerning which "heroes" were or were not homosexual. A hero is a hero. A legend is a legend. Must we have their sexual orientation on their resumes for presentation to our kids?

Please reposition your heads squarely upon your shoulders and THINK! The very survival of our public education system depends on public support.

We've lost the religious right and the Republican wealthy. Alienation of moderates is something public education can't afford.

Linda Sexton
Norman, Oklahoma

Let's Talk!

Letters are edited for length and clarity. Contact *NEA Today*:

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"I admire what you do."

"So you're a teacher. That's great."

"I take my hat off to you."

"Keep up the good work."

"It's nice to meet someone dedicated to America's kids."

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